



# 10

## Roman Civilization

### Summary

The story of Rome has fascinated professional historians and amateur students of history for over two thousand years. In this unit we will survey the different phases of Roman history, take an especially close look at Augustus Caesar, consider Roman contributions to law, and have a look at everyday life in Rome. The Bible study considers the kingdom of God, especially as it contrasted with the Roman Empire.

### Lessons

- 46 - The Rise of Rome
- 47 - Key Person: Augustus Caesar
- 48 - Key Concept: Roman Law
- 49 - Everyday Life: The Roman Empire
- 50 - Bible Study: The Kingdom of God

*Roman Aqueduct, Pont-du-Gard, France (First Century AD)*

## Memory Work

Learn Romans 5:6-8 by the end of the unit.

## Books Used

The Bible  
*In Their Words*  
*Julius Caesar*

## Project (choose one)

- 1) Write 300 to 500 words on one of the following topics:
  - Why do you think Rome achieved the success it did as a civilization? What were its key strengths?
  - Write a news article that tells about the assassination of Julius Caesar: what happened, when and where, who was involved, why it happened, and what is expected to happen as a result of it. Write it for a newspaper or a radio news broadcast. See Lesson 46.
- 2) Write a short play that takes place in ancient Rome. Make the actors, dialogue, and action realistic. Let the point you are trying to make be obvious from what happens in the play instead of having someone say it as a line.
- 3) Create a model of a real structure built by Romans. Locate one or more photos of the structure. Make your model as close to scale as you can and from the material of your choosing (wood, cardboard, clay, STYROFOAM™, LEGO® bricks, etc.).

## Literature

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) was born in the English country town of Stratford-upon-Avon and moved to London to become an actor and playwright. His plays were being performed by the early 1590s, and his popularity grew immensely over the next twenty years. Shakespeare retired to Stratford a few years before his death.

Shakespeare is generally regarded as the greatest writer in English literature, and *Julius Caesar* is one of his best works. Shakespeare's plays are categorized as either comedies, tragedies, or histories. *Julius Caesar* is a hybrid of history and tragedy, but it is usually classified as a tragedy. The play is a study of power and political motivation.

Though Caesar himself is a relatively minor character in the play, everything in the drama revolves around him. Was Caesar a tyrant who would destroy Rome or a savior who would rescue Rome? Was his assassination a blow for liberty from oppression or an act of treason against the best interests of the people? Like any major figure, Caesar had supporters and critics. In the play, Cassius opposes Caesar and is suspicious of his motives. Brutus wants to do what is good and is at war within himself over what course to take regarding Caesar. Cassius recruits Brutus to join the assassination plot. The result of Caesar's assassination is civil war. Octavian (or Octavius, later known as Augustus), supported by Mark Antony (Marcus Antonius), emerges as the winner.

Read the play in an annotated edition that has notes explaining vocabulary and other elements of the dialogue that might be obscure to the modern reader. You might also consider listening to a complete audio edition or watching a video presentation while following along with the printed text. Shakespeare relied on Plutarch, other ancient writers, and more contemporary sources for his information about Caesar and his times. Shakespeare sometimes plays fast and loose with historical facts, and the dialogue includes some anachronisms; but concentrate on the beauty of the language and the insight into human nature that Shakespeare reveals.



*Census Frieze Monument (Second Century BC)*

## Lesson 46

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# The Rise of Rome

**R**omulus and Remus were abandoned twins who were rescued and nursed by a she-wolf. A shepherd's family reared them. As young men, the twins decided to build a city at the place along the Tiber River where they were rescued. They disagreed on the location, however; and Romulus killed Remus. Romulus founded a city on seven hills in 753 BC and named it Rome in his own honor.

That is one myth about how Rome began. If that story doesn't appeal to you, you can find others. The poet Virgil offers a different legend in the *Aeneid*, which dates from the first century BC, when the Empire was reaching the height of its power. Virgil mentions Romulus and Remus but focuses on Aeneas, an intrepid soldier in the Trojan War who encountered many adventures and tribulations on his way to founding the city of Rome. Virgil clearly borrowed from Homer's *Odyssey* to tell this story.

Neither story, of course, is true. Our best indications are that Italy was invaded by tribes from Central Europe around the 12th century BC, much as Greece was. Those who settled in central Italy became the shepherding and farming Latin people and founded Rome as a city-state around 750 BC. The area was then invaded by the Etruscans

around 600 BC. We know relatively little about the Etruscans. They are thought to have come from Asia Minor. The Etruscans used an alphabet based on the Greek alphabet, employed the arch in building, and practiced gladiatorial combat.

Around 509 BC, the Latins on the seven hills reasserted themselves, threw off Etruscan rule, and became the most powerful people of the area known as Latium. Here begins the distinct history of the people of Rome. Being done with Etruscan kings, the Romans established a form of government called a republic, which means "the affairs of the people." The Roman Republic lasted for almost 500 years.

## The Republic

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During the early part of the Republic, Roman life and government were controlled by wealthy landowners called patricians. The ruling body of government, the Senate, was composed of three hundred representatives of patrician families who were elected for life. Every year the Senate elected two consuls to be chief executives and military leaders. The consuls had equal power, and each had veto power over the actions of the other (*veto* is Latin for "I forbid").





Cincinnatus Leaves the Plow for the Roman Dictatorship, *Juan Antonio Ribera (Spanish, 1806)*

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After his term, a consul became a member of the Senate. In a time of crisis, the Senate could name a dictator; but he could serve no longer than six months.

In the other main social class were the plebeians. These were farmers, artisans, small merchants, traders, and other such working people. The plebeians were citizens, but they could not be elected to the Senate or to the consulship. A plebeian by law could not marry someone from a patrician family. The Assembly, made up of representatives elected by the plebeians, had little practical power. A third group in Roman society were the slaves. These were usually prisoners of war; and although some were well-educated and highly talented, they had no legal rights.

The service that Cincinnatus rendered in 458 BC embodied some of the highest ideals of the Roman Republic: duty, efficiency, sacrifice, and country above all. Imagine a Roman army surrounded by enemy forces. Five soldiers escape to carry word back to Rome. The Senate decides to appoint a dictator, who can rule with absolute power for six months. A delegation goes to the home of Cincinnatus, a wealthy landowner who is plowing his field. Cincinnatus leaves his plow, hurries to Rome, and calls for every eligible man to enlist for service. The commander defeats the enemy and returns to Rome victorious. Then, sixteen days after being appointed, Cincinnatus hands back the reins of power and

picks up once again the reins of his farm animal to continue plowing.

The government of the Republic fought a series of wars over several centuries, mostly for two reasons: perceived need, and greed. The growing Roman population needed new areas in which to settle. Roman merchants also wanted to expand their economic activity, which could be accomplished by trade but also by the conquest of other lands. Roman armies were usually successful in these wars. They were well-trained and dedicated to their cause. They were also well-organized. A Roman legion of about 6,000 men was divided into smaller units that could be dispatched and moved quickly.

Military success led to greater wealth for Rome, both through the tribute paid by the defeated armies and by the increased trade brought to the city. However, the warfare also had a domestic impact. The army was all-patrician at first; but with the greater need for fighting men, plebeians were pressed into service. As a result, the plebeians began to demand a greater voice in the government they were called upon to defend.

The Republic, which was based on the older patrician-plebeian social system, was forced to consider changes when society changed. An Assembly of Centuries was formed to represent the army. This Assembly began to choose the consuls. The Assembly of Tribes became the plebeian body. It chose ten tribunes each year as the spokesmen for the average people. One of the most important developments urged by the Assembly of Tribes was the formulation and publication of a code of laws in 451 BC. The Twelve Tables of Law were posted in the Forum (the central marketplace, equivalent to the Greek agora). These laws were no great advancement for plebeians, but at least they could now insist that judges apply the law fairly and without partiality toward the patrician class.

Plebeians continued to work for a greater role in government. Tribunes were granted the veto power, and the Assembly of Tribes gained the right to pass laws without Senate approval. In 367 BC a plebeian

was elected consul. Eventually the plebeians were allowed to marry patricians. Some were elected to the Senate.

Another change in Roman society that threatened the old structure was the rise of a middle class, composed mainly of plebeians who had married into patrician families and who had become wealthy through trade and government contracts. These people did not fit the standard definition of patricians or plebeians, but they wanted a role in government and exercised their influence to get it.

## International Expansion

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The Romans subjugated the other tribes on the Italian peninsula by 264 BC and began to look for new lands to conquer. Rome's chief rival was the kingdom of Carthage on the north African coast. Carthage had been founded as a colony by the Phoenicians around the same time that Rome was founded. The colony became a power in its own right, primarily because of a strong naval fleet. Trading vessels from Carthage plied the Mediterranean and the Atlantic coast of Europe.

Carthage established colonies on the island of Sicily, just off of the Italian coast; and therein lay her downfall. Rome felt threatened as well as stymied in its expansionist desires. Over 120 years, Rome fought three costly wars against Carthage. These are known as the Punic Wars, from the Latin word *Punicus*, which means Phoenicia. The first war lasted twenty-three years and centered on control of Sicily. Rome defeated Carthage and pushed the conquered nation off of the island.

The second Punic War came as a result of Carthaginian expansion in Spain, which again threatened Rome. In this war the great military leader of Carthage, Hannibal, executed an invasion of Italy from the north over the Alps that involved the use of elephants for carrying equipment and for striking terror in his opponents' hearts. All but one of the elephants died, but Hannibal was still able to win battle after battle in Italy. Rome won the war,

however, by invading Carthage itself, which forced Hannibal to return home to defend his city. There he was defeated and fled to Asia Minor. After sixteen years of fighting, Carthage surrendered in 201 BC, paid a heavy tribute, and promised not to start another war without Rome's consent. With these events Rome became the unquestioned major power in the western Mediterranean.

In 150 BC Carthage fought a nearby kingdom without getting Rome's permission. The Roman government was outraged and embarked upon the Third Punic War. Roman forces invaded and burned Carthage. The city's population was killed or sold into slavery. Rome took over the region and added it to its expanding list of overseas colonies. Roman armies brutally subjugated Corinth in Greece about the same time Carthage was destroyed (146 BC). Rome could then boast of control over Spain, Greece, Egypt, Asia Minor, and much of the eastern Mediterranean.

This expansion was again a mixed blessing for Rome. The Romans developed an effective and flexible system for governing a growing empire. Governors appointed by the Senate oversaw the collection of taxes and other aspects of Rome's interests, but local peoples were allowed a significant degree of control over domestic matters. Roman coffers were greatly enriched through tribute paid by subject nations and by increased trade. However, provincial governors were sometimes corrupt.

Grain shipments flowing into Rome, often as tribute, lowered food prices and caused many small farmers to lose their land. A small group of wealthy landowners built huge estates called *latifundia*,

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### *Ruins at Carthage (Tunisia)*



worked by slaves. Many farmers, unable to compete with low prices and slave labor, moved to Rome to find work. When most of them didn't, they became a restless mob that increased economic and political pressures in the city.

## From Republic to Empire

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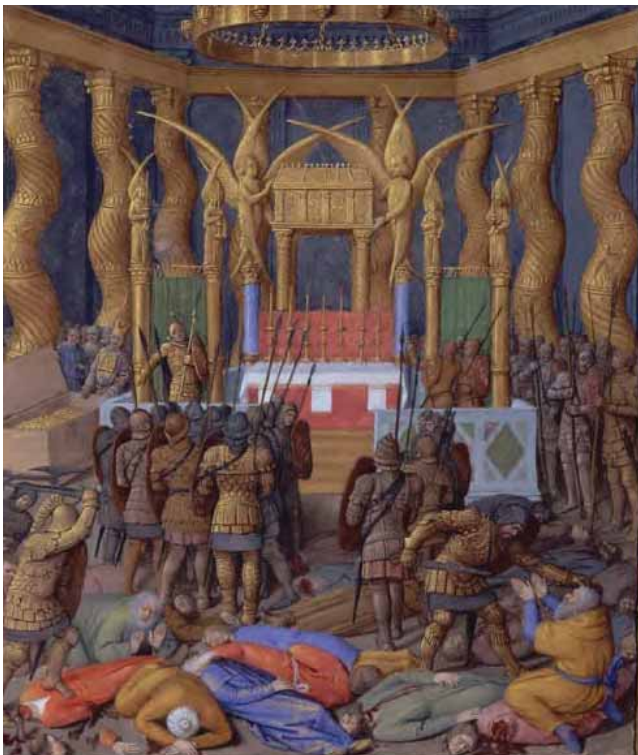
For about a century before Julius Caesar rose to power, the Republic of Rome was shaken by bitter disputes between powerful individuals and political factions as well as by dramatic social upheavals. As wealth increased, many senators became more concerned about protecting their possessions than about doing what was best for the Republic. Meanwhile, the number of the poor increased, as did their plight; and some politicians took up their cause and demanded reforms.

Tiberius Gracchus was elected consul in 133 BC. He was from a wealthy and distinguished family, but he championed the cause of the poor. Tiberius wanted to limit the amount of land one person could own and to give excess land to the poor. Members of the Senate, however, were unwilling to part with

their holdings. A group of noblemen murdered Tiberius and about 300 of his followers. A few years later, his younger brother Gaius Gracchus took up his fallen brother's cause and proposed new reforms; but he met a similar fate. Gaius and some 3,000 of his followers were killed.

In 88 BC a civil war broke out between two ambitious and powerful generals and their followers. Sulla was victorious. In 82 BC he was declared dictator, whereupon he abolished the six-month limit on a dictator's rule. For the next several decades, Rome was ruled by a series of generals. One of them, Gnaeus Pompey, won great military victories but was opposed by the Senate. Pompey found an ally in Julius Caesar, who himself had extended Roman rule in Spain. Pompey and Caesar approached another general, Crassus, and formed the First Triumvirate to rule Rome. Crassus died in war, while Pompey and Caesar came to distrust each other. Pompey aligned himself with the Senate, and Caesar was declared an enemy of the state.

In 49 BC the Senate ordered Caesar, then in Gaul, to dismiss his army and return to Rome. Caesar refused to do so. He crossed the Rubicon River, the boundary between Gaul and Italy, heading for Rome with his army. He defeated the forces loyal to Pompey, but he then continued to engage in warfare in various parts of the empire. In 44 BC the Senate appointed Caesar dictator for life. A brilliant, crafty, and power-hungry politician, Caesar gave land to the poor, extended citizenship to people who lived in provinces outside of Italy, and undertook extensive public building projects. However, Caesar was strongly opposed by Senators who feared (or who were jealous of) his popularity and who saw him as a tyrant. On March 15, 44 BC, Caesar was stabbed




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*Pompey led forces that participated in a war between opposing Jewish armies in the 60s BC. According to Josephus, after Pompey's side captured Jerusalem, he entered the temple. This illustration of the event is from a 15th-century manuscript of Josephus by French artist Jean Fouquet.*

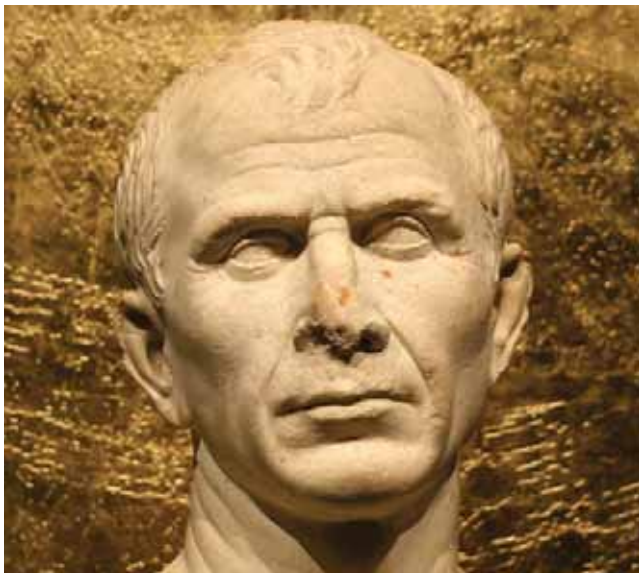


*Cleopatra VII Philopator was part of the Ptolemaic dynasty that ruled Egypt after the death of Alexander the Great. As the last Pharaoh of Egypt before it became a Roman province, she was a shrewd politician. She bore a son to Julius Caesar, and after his death bore three children to Mark Antony. Helen Gardner (shown at right) portrayed Cleopatra in a 1912 silent film.*

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to death as he entered the Senate. Conspirators led by Gaius Cassius and Marcus Brutus fomented the assassination plot.

Caesar had adopted his eighteen-year-old grand-nephew Octavian as son and heir shortly before he was assassinated. Octavian enlisted the allegiance of Mark Antony and Marcus Lepidus, two of Caesar's military commanders, to form the Second Triumvirate and reclaim Caesar's power for themselves. Antony and Octavian, however, fell into a quarrel. Antony allied himself with Queen Cleopatra of Egypt, and Octavian declared war against them. The forces of Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC. Octavian offered to rule with limited powers, but in actuality he was already dictator. The Senate declared him to be Augustus, "Exalted One" (a divine title), in 27 BC. We will examine the reign of Augustus in the next lesson.



The power of the Roman dictator had been growing for some time at the expense of the Senate and the populace. With Augustus, the transition was complete. The Senate named him imperator, or emperor, and the Roman Empire began. After centuries of almost continuous warfare against other nations, the period from 27 BC to 180 AD was relatively peaceful. The Empire enjoyed increasing prosperity under this *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace).

Roman emperors never devised an orderly process of succession, which meant that the character and abilities of later emperors varied greatly and the country was victimized by repeated internal clashes among competing claimants to the title. The most common approach to succession was adoption and designation. The emperor adopted a relative or close associate to be his son and successor. The choice might be made for a variety of reasons, not necessarily character and competency. Tiberius, Claudius, Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus Aurelius

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*Caesar was the family name of Julius Caesar. In his honor, later emperors were given the title of Caesar. Many centuries later, the titles of the German kaiser and the Russian czar were also derived from the name.*



## Unit 10 - Roman Civilization

were able leaders; Caligula and Nero, on the other hand, were evil and probably insane.

When people refer to Rome, they might be referring to one of many different periods and forms of government: the city of Rome, the Republic, the Empire in its days of power, the Empire in its slow decline, pagan Rome, or Christian Rome. Each period and form of government had its distinctive features, triumphs, and struggles. In this unit we focus on Roman history through the reign of Augustus. In future lessons we will discuss later developments.

*Around 117 AD under Trajan, the Roman Empire reached its greatest size and strength. The green areas on the map show the territory controlled by Rome in Europe, Africa, and Asia.*

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*And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.*

*Daniel 2:42*

### Assignments for Lesson 46

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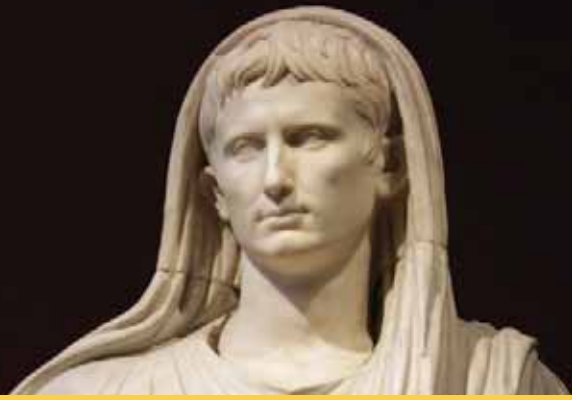
**Bible** Read Romans 1-3. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

**In Their Words** Read the excerpt from *The Histories* by Polybius (pages 66-67).

**Literature** Begin reading the play *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare. Plan to finish it by the end of this unit.

**Student Review** Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 46.





*Statue of Augustus (c. 10 BC)*

## Lesson 47 - Key Person

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# Augustus Caesar

The Roman Republic ended after decades of instability. Politicians did not just criticize each other; they had each other assassinated. Generals competing for political power each had their own armed force of loyal troops. The rise to power of Julius Caesar and his resultant assassination were not exceptional. They were instead merely the culmination of a long-developing trend.

Julius Caesar was killed in 44 BC. His grand-nephew, adopted son, and chosen heir, Octavian, was only eighteen at the time. Seventeen years later, after more bloody conflict, Rome finally had peace and a new emperor: Octavian, now titled Augustus. Before his death in 14 AD, he oversaw the golden age of Roman culture and established the foundation for peace and progress that lasted many decades. His talents and accomplishments have led some to call Augustus the greatest person in Roman history.

### Rise to Power

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Octavian was born in 63 BC. After he turned fifteen, Octavian accompanied his great-uncle Julius Caesar on military campaigns. It was clear that Caesar was grooming him to be his successor. When Caesar died, Octavian was in Illyricum on

the Balkan peninsula. Octavian hurried to southern Italy, but only as a private citizen. There he learned that Caesar had named him as heir in his will. Octavian took command of a large army near Brundisium. His family feared for his life, thinking that those who had killed Caesar would come after him also.

Octavian, however, waded into the dangerous political waters without hesitation. Being Caesar's heir did not mean that Octavian automatically inherited Caesar's power, but he could use his position to his advantage in the competition for power in the Roman government that followed. The conspirators who killed Caesar found that the people of Rome loved Caesar and hated what they had done. Octavian took the name Caesar to capitalize on Julius Caesar's popularity.

After overcoming all rivals and opposition in sometimes ruthless fashion, Octavian achieved the pinnacle of power by winning the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. Octavian maintained and increased his power by appearing not to want power. In 27 BC he expressed a desire to retire from public life, but the Senate pleaded with him to remain; so naturally he did. The Senators saw in him a refreshing change toward stability and strength of character that had been sadly lacking over the previous century.

Augustus said that he would rule only the major provinces while leaving the oversight of Rome and Italy in the hands of the Senate. He was generous and respectful toward the Senate, although he controlled the real power as emperor. Augustus was given many titles and positions, including consul, imperator, pontifex maximus (chief priest, a position given him in 12 BC), and “Father of His Country” (given in 2 BC with the suggestion that Roman history started over with him). However, Augustus most preferred the title of princeps, or first citizen. His rule is sometimes called the Principate for this reason. As first citizen, he led a simple life, in the fashion of a Roman patrician without the regal splendor that Julius Caesar had come to use.



## Reforms Under Augustus

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Augustus reformed the military and had the armies under his personal command, but he did not maintain power by resorting to the threat of military force against his fellow citizens. When he came to power, the standing army consisted of about 300,000 professional volunteers in sixty legions. Augustus cut the size of the army by half, guaranteed regular pay for the troops, and provided pensions for those who were discharged. He encouraged retired soldiers to live throughout the provinces to help in the defense of the empire should such help be needed. Every soldier swore allegiance to Augustus personally (not to the state or the empire), and the soldiers looked to him as being personally responsible for their pay.

The new emperor did not see warfare as a way of life. Instead, he wanted peace as a way of life throughout the Empire with the army positioned to defend against invaders and to preserve peace should internal uprisings occur. Augustus defined and accepted the extant territorial limits of the empire and did not seek to expand them. The area under Roman control stretched 3,000 miles east to west, 2,000 north to south, and included an estimated 50 million people. To strengthen the empire, he extended Roman citizenship to many in the provinces, cleared pirates from the seas, built a network of roads, and improved the postal service in use at the time.

Augustus also reformed government. He placed the day-to-day work of government in the hands of professional civil servants, not political appointees. Augustus appointed able, trustworthy men to be provincial governors, unlike the corrupt political hacks that had previously held these positions.

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*Construction on the Temple of Kalabsha in Nubia started about 30 BC. This image depicts Augustus in Egyptian style. The entire temple was relocated for preservation when the Aswan High Dam was built.*

## Roman Literature

Three prominent Roman poets lived during the reign of Augustus. Virgil is best known as the author of the epic *Aeneid*. Horace and Ovid published collections that included a variety of shorter poems. This was also the period when the historian Livy wrote a history of Rome, known not so much for its historical accuracy as for its encouragement of traditional Roman ideals by telling stories (and myths) from Rome's past.



Virgil Reading the *Aeneid* to Augustus, Octavia, and Livia, *Jean-Baptiste Wicar* (French, 1793)

These men were now paid salaries, which meant (1) they were answerable to Augustus and (2) they did not have to be wealthy to serve. Augustus also called for a census of the empire so that taxes might be levied and collected more fairly. This was the census that led Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem to be registered.

In addition, Augustus undertook a major program of construction. He ordered the building of major public facilities to keep people working and to renew pride in Rome. Augustus said that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble.

Trade and industry increased during his tenure. Augustus also tried to rebuild Roman character. He oversaw the passage of laws that encouraged marriage and morality and that discouraged adultery and divorce (although Augustus himself was not always faithful to his wife).

## Legacy of Augustus

The title of Augustus (“Exalted One”) suggests how he was viewed by the political leaders of his day. He appeared to them to be a gift of the gods, bringing order and stability to the city and the

empire. Some, especially in the provinces, came to worship him as divine. Augustus accepted and even encouraged this practice. Whatever he might have believed about himself, he knew that such emperor-worship would increase loyalty to the empire in the sometimes troublesome outlying areas.

Later emperors sometimes were given and sometimes demanded worship as divinity (it became routine for emperors to be voted into divine status by the Senate upon their death). This emperor-worship became something of an official civil religion, and as time went on those who refused to take part (such as Christians) were seen as suspect by governing authorities.

Coin from the reign of Augustus (c. 14 AD)





## Cicero

*Cicero (106-43 BC) is regarded as one of the greatest thinkers, writers, and orators that Rome produced. He served as a consul of Rome and was a long-time member of the Senate. In the turmoil that followed the assassination of Julius Caesar, Cicero made a series of speeches in the Senate against Mark Antony and in favor of the Senate supporting Octavian (who became Augustus later). Although Cicero had nothing to do with Julius Caesar's assassination, Antony marked him and his family for death. They saw him as a supporter of the*



*status quo and thus an enemy of their purposes. Supporters of Antony killed Cicero, his brother, and his nephew. Cicero's son, Marcus, was not in Italy at the time and thus escaped execution. Marcus later served as consul after Octavian's triumph over his opponents in 30 BC.*

Cicero Denounces Catiline  
Cesare Maccari (Italian, 1889)

Augustus was like any human, a mixture of good and bad. He was a pagan, but he did genuinely try to maintain peace and improve the lives of people in the empire. Roman political leaders and the population in general wanted rule by able persons

and not continued conspiracy and civil strife. Augustus provided this leadership and enabled the Pax Romana, during which time Jesus lived, died, and arose again and the gospel of true peace in Him began to be proclaimed.

*Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus,  
that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.  
Luke 2:1*

## Assignments for Lesson 47

**Bible** Read Romans 4-6. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

**Literature** Continue reading *Julius Caesar*.

**Student Review** Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 47.



## Lesson 48 - Key Concept

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# Roman Law

We are indebted to the Romans for much that is in our world today. The Latin language, for example, was the basis for many European languages spoken today and also played an important role in the development of English. This lesson focuses on Roman law as a key illustration of Roman accomplishments.

The Roman practice of law provided at least two basic principles of jurisprudence that have greatly influenced the administration of justice in the Western world: standard legal procedure and the principle of natural law. (Jurisprudence, by the way, is from the Latin *jurisprudentes*, which means skilled in the law).

### Roman Legal Practices

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The Twelve Tables of Law codified legal practices in the fifth century BC. From 366 BC a praetor, appointed by the Senate, oversaw the law courts of the Republic. The courts applied the law; but the praetor interpreted the law, and his interpretations became the standard for the application of the law thenceforth. This practice came to be called common law, which is important in the British and American legal systems. The Romans practiced a double standard for many centuries, applying

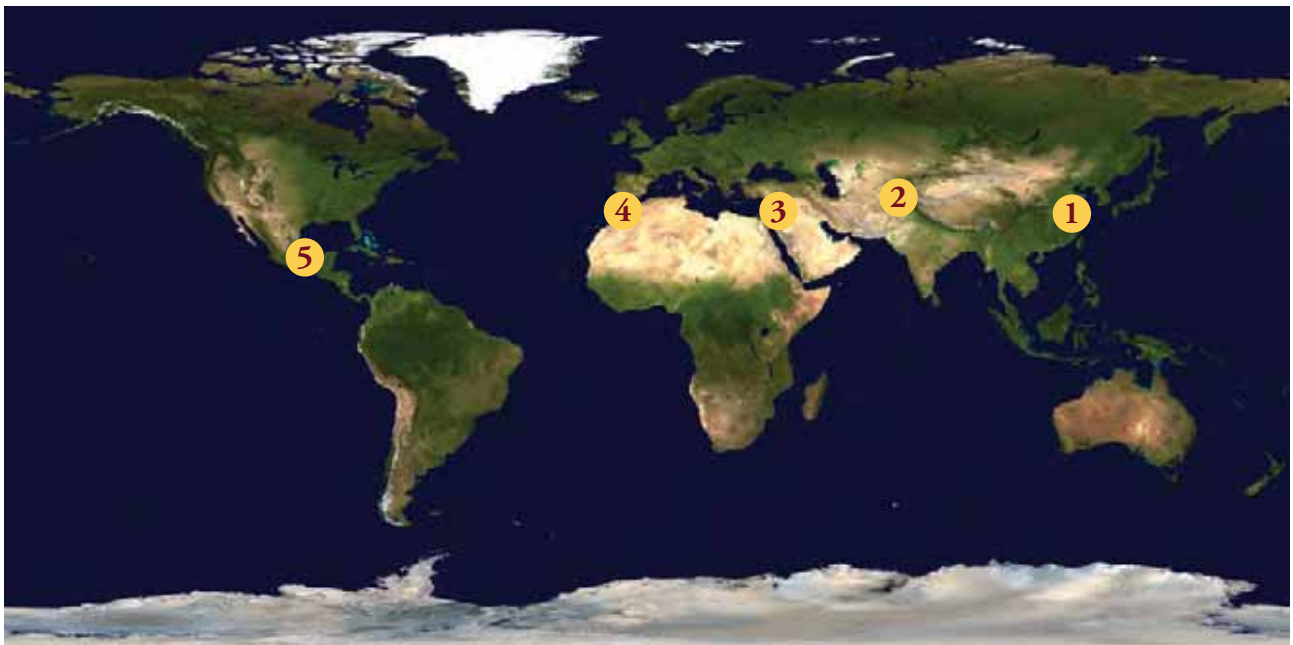
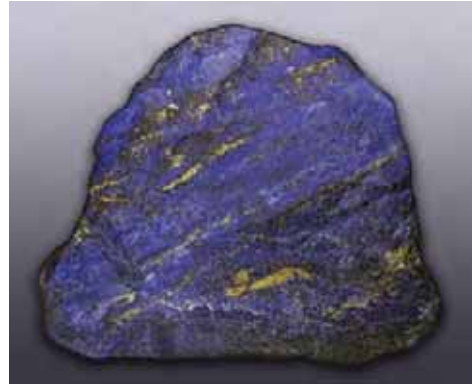
one set of laws to citizens and another to the rest of the empire's people; but the two standards were gradually brought into alignment by 212 AD.

A complete codification of Roman laws, legal principles, and commentaries took place in the 500s AD with the *Corpus Juris Civilis* ("Body of Civil Law"). Its compilation was overseen by the Emperor Justinian. The result is often called the Justinian Code. Specific legal procedures that we inherited from Rome include the accused being considered innocent until proven guilty, a verdict based on evidence (not social status or wealth), and the following of due process in all legal proceedings.

The Romans believed that the laws of the state should reflect that which is right and just according to universal reason—that is, what seems reasonable to all people. They recognized a standard of right and wrong that is separate from and prior to the state and any particular leader or form of government. This natural law is what they wanted their code of laws to reflect. The source for this natural law in their thinking was not God but the natural order of the world. This concept of natural law was an important influence on Enlightenment thinking in the 1600s and 1700s. This directly influenced the American Declaration of Independence, which proclaimed, "We hold these truths to be self-evident . . ."

## What Else Was Happening? (200-1 BC)

- 1 Chinese astronomers had been keeping records of eclipses and comets for centuries. In the first century BC they began keeping detailed records of sunspots, darker patches visible on the surface of the sun. They noted that more sunspots led to warmer weather.
- 2 The Badakhshan area (modern Afghanistan) has long been the world's major source of high quality lapis lazuli, a gemstone with a deep blue color (example at right). Increased activity along the Silk Road helped to distribute lapis lazuli from Africa to China.
- 3 After the conquests of Alexander, many Jews in Palestine began to adopt Greek customs. The Hasmonean family (also known as the Maccabees) established an independent Jewish nation from 164 to 63 BC, when Palestine was taken over by Rome.
- 4 Juba II was a prince of Numidia in North Africa. After the Romans made Numidia a province, Juba went to Rome, learned Latin and Greek, and was adopted by the Caesars. Augustus arranged his marriage to Cleopatra Selene II, a daughter of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, and appointed him king of Mauretania (modern Morocco and western Algeria). The tomb of Juba and his wife is shown at right.
- 5 Cuicuilco is one of the oldest known cities in the Valley of Mexico. By the first century BC, it had grown to prominence in the area. It was destroyed about 50 BC by the eruption of the volcano Xitle, and the nearby city of Teotihuacan assumed greater importance.





## Law in the New Testament

*The New Testament contains examples of the impact of Roman law as well as the use of natural law. For instance, in the Empire, subject peoples did not have the right to carry out capital punishment. This is why the Jewish authorities had to get the approval of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate before Jesus could be crucified. Additionally, Paul appealed to his rights as a Roman citizen to avoid being beaten (Acts 22:25-29) and when he wanted his case heard by Caesar (Acts 25:11). The apostle made use of God's natural law in his argument that sinful man was without excuse for not following the way of God since His attributes were obvious from the created world (Romans 1:19-20). In his discussion of the head covering issue in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul asked, "Does not even nature itself teach you . . . ?" (1 Corinthians 11:14).*

As with many accomplishments by the Romans (and by mankind in general), the recognition of a higher or natural law had both good and bad elements. It was good that they recognized a foundation of truth that was not the creation of one particular ruler or culture. It is unfortunate, however, that they did not know God and recognize Him as the source of ultimate truth. In addition, the

Roman concept of natural law is limited because it makes man's reason the final arbiter of truth, and man's reason is flawed and influenced by culture and tradition. Not everything that seemed natural, reasonable, and just to the Romans would seem that way to us. In our own day, the loss of a consensus about what is right and just has shown up in debates over such topics as homosexual marriage. As good and helpful as reason and tradition are, they cannot replace God's truth as the one true, lasting standard for all places and times.



## Conclusion

Unfortunately, the Roman culture did not honor God. This fact has two consequences. First, their accomplishments honor man's abilities but not God's. We should seek to use our talents to serve the Creator. When we do, God can truly act through us in a way that is "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). Second, in the Roman legacy we see the depth to which sinful humans can stoop when they do not acknowledge and serve the Creator.

*The personification of Justice as a woman holding scales and a sword dates from Roman time. This 1940 carving by Abolhassan Sadighi is on the courthouse in Tebran, Iran.*



Tens of thousands of people watched as people and animals killed other people for entertainment. Slaves were an integral part of Roman life and economy and were generally treated as mere property. Immorality, homosexuality, and divorce became commonplace. Solutions to political conflicts were often sought not by ballots and debates but at the ends of swords and daggers. We must remember these facts as we appraise the glory that was Rome.

The contributions that Rome made to our world are a good reminder of why we need to understand history. We can appreciate what is good, be inspired by what is remarkable, understand the factors that have influenced world cultures even until today, and be warned of the evils into which man so easily and so often falls. Those people who wore togas, spoke what is now called a dead language, and knew nothing of modern inventions are not so distant from us after all.

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*The commander came and said to him [Paul], “Tell me, are you a Roman?” And he said, “Yes.” The commander answered, “I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money.” And Paul said, “But I was actually born a citizen.”*  
*Acts 22:27-28*

### **Assignments for Lesson 48**

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**Bible** Read Romans 7-8. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

**In Their Words** Read the excerpts from the Twelve Tables of Law (pages 68-69).

**Literature** Continue reading *Julius Caesar*.

**Student Review** Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 48.



*Wheel Ruts in a Street at Pompeii*

## Lesson 49 - Everyday Life

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# The Roman Empire

Since the republic and empire of Rome survived over one thousand years, Roman life and culture went through several phases. Think about how life in America today is quite different from how things were a short two hundred years ago. Nevertheless, we can identify some basic characteristics of Roman culture.

### Life in Imperial Rome

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During the *Pax Romana*, the city of Rome had a population of about one million people. As has always been the case, the lifestyle of the poor was quite different from that of the rich. Many poor lived in multi-story tenement buildings. Some were as tall as seven stories. Besides being crammed together in small apartments, residents always faced the risk of fire because the tenements were built of wood. Many wealthy families, by contrast, had large, beautiful villas with many rooms, a courtyard, and other amenities. Dinner parties lasting several hours were common.

In the Roman family, the father had absolute control. He could decide whether a newborn baby would be kept or abandoned. Deformed infants and unwanted girls were often “exposed” (left to die or to be picked up by slave-traders). Wealthier families

provided for the education of their children by hiring a tutor or sending their children to a private school. Girls as well as boys received a formal education, although girls usually ended theirs at a younger age. Fathers arranged the marriages for their children, and girls would often be married by the age of fourteen. A boy became a citizen at the age of sixteen with a ceremony in the Forum. Women had more rights than in Greek society. They could own property and would sometimes go to public events.

Rome was a teeming, busy city. One dominant reality in the city was the presence of hundreds of thousands of slaves. Slaves were usually captives of war and often filled responsible positions for their masters. Another dominant presence were the many poor people. The Roman government eventually began making welfare payments to those who were not able to find work. To entertain the masses, the government sponsored gladiatorial combat in the Colosseum and races at the Circus Maximus.

### Architecture

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Romans built public buildings on a grand scale. They used bricks, large blocks of stone, and concrete. Rather than building entire structures with marble, they often used less expensive building materials and



*Much of what we know about life in the Roman Empire is from archaeological work at the city of Pompeii, which was buried by a volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. The eruption caught the city unprepared. People, houses, and businesses were covered and preserved by the ash. The site was forgotten for centuries. It was discovered in the late 16th century during work on an underground water line. Archaeological work began in the mid-1700s and continues today. Beautiful paintings have been found in many of the buildings. Shown clockwise from top left are a still life with a bowl of fruit, a husband and wife holding symbols of literacy, a banquet, and a market.*







*Roman Road on the Spanish Island of Minorca*

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covered the exterior with marble. This made their buildings beautiful as well as durable.

The building abilities of Romans are seen in many ways. They crisscrossed the empire with roads primarily to enable more rapid movement of armies and officials, but trade and travel benefited also. The Romans built over 50,000 miles of roads, some of which are still in use today. A typical road was fifteen feet wide and five feet deep. The base of gravel was topped with large, smooth stones. Roman civil engineers learned how to cut through mountains to build their roads.

A key element of Roman construction was the arch, which they learned from previous civilizations. They found that an arch of stones could hold greater weight than a single lintel across an opening. The Romans employed a series of arches to make barrel vaults and tunnels, and they used intersecting barrel vaults to allow more light and to enable larger areas to be enclosed.

A series of arches built side to side made possible the construction of long structures such as walls and aqueducts. To move water from mountains or springs, the Romans built a system of pipes and ditches and—to bridge valleys—aqueducts.

Aqueducts were raised channels that used gravity to carry water. Some also had pathways for pedestrians and chariots. Some aqueducts are still standing and a few are still in use. One such structure in southern France (see photo on page 247) stands 160 feet high, runs a length of 900 feet, and is made of stone block with no mortar. It is estimated that Roman aqueducts carried 200 million gallons of water per day.

The Pantheon temple in Rome stands as a testament to Roman architecture and Roman efficiency. After all, why not build one temple to honor all the gods? The original Pantheon was built during the time of Augustus, but after fire destroyed it, construction on another began around 120 AD. Sixteen granite columns support the porch, and the doors weigh fifteen tons; but the main feature is its massive concrete dome. It reaches a height of 142 feet, which is the same as its diameter. A thirty-foot hole in the middle allows light to enter. The dome was built using a wooden mold to hold the concrete, and the walls of the building are twenty feet thick to support the huge dome. The building was eventually used as a place of Christian worship many centuries after it was built. It has been the

*The Roman propensity to build is evidenced by the remnants of their structures that stand on three continents. Concrete—gravel and sand mixed with mortar—was not used for several centuries after Rome fell because the secret of its composition was lost. Its rediscovery enabled a revitalization of building in Europe.*

*Roman construction took several forms. Public bathhouses, some quite elaborate, were constructed across the Empire as places for men to meet and relax. An example from Beirut, Lebanon, is shown below at left. Hadrian's Wall in northern England (below at right) was built in the second century AD to keep the troublesome Scots out of Roman-controlled territory. In Rome emperors built monuments and arches, often with sculptures and reliefs, in their own honor. The Arch of Titus is shown at the bottom of the page.*





inspiration for other famous domes, such as St. Paul's Cathedral in London and the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.

Many cities throughout the empire had a structure for public games. The Colosseum in Rome was begun in 69 AD and finished eleven years later. It rose almost fifty feet high and covered about six acres. The top supported beams that held a covering which protected spectators from the sun. The Colosseum floor (280 feet by 175 feet) was made of heavy wooden planks, usually covered with dirt or sand.

Beneath the Colosseum floor was a network of corridors and rooms where animals and people waited to perform—or to go to their deaths. The floor could be removed and the entire area flooded to stage a mock sea battle. The seating capacity of the Colosseum has been estimated at 50,000 to 60,000. The structure has been damaged by earthquakes; and much of the original material was used to build other structures, including part of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

## Religion

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Most Romans believed in a spirit world that influenced this world. This spirit world included gods but also lesser spirits and even the deification of

such virtues as victory, hope, health, and success. The main purpose of religious activity was to appeal for blessings. Rome did have temples and priests (who were government functionaries), but the center of Roman spiritual life was the home. The father led a daily worship exercise that kept spiritual realities (as they saw them) ever-present in the people's minds.

The Romans tended to adopt the gods of other peoples if they thought those gods would be helpful. Many Greek gods, for instance, came to be seen as the same as the gods the Romans worshiped. Rome's chief god, Jupiter, for instance, was identified with the Greeks' Zeus. Venus was parallel to the Greeks' Aphrodite, Mars to Ares, and so forth. However, Romans did not see the gods as glorified, out-of-control humans the way the Greeks did. This would have gone against the Romans' guiding principles of duty and order. We have mentioned earlier the adoption of certain Greek philosophies and the practice of emperor worship that were part of the religious landscape of Rome.

The multiplicity of divine beings, which included the often very ungodly emperors, suggests the shallowness of Roman belief. Thinking that human beings might be gods suggests a low view of the spiritual realm rather than a high view of people. Roman religion was an attempt at finding ultimate truth, but it failed to do so.



### Marcus Aurelius

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*The Greek philosophies of Epicureanism and Stoicism became popular among many upper class Romans. Stoicism had an appeal because of the time-honored Roman values of duty, discipline, and civic obligation. For those looking for something to believe in, Stoicism became something of a religious faith. Perhaps the most famous Roman Stoic was Marcus Aurelius, a general who became emperor in the second half of the second century AD. His book Meditations is a statement of his Stoic philosophy. Unfortunately, as emperor Aurelius approved a persecution of Christians in response to a plague which many believed the Christians had caused by their refusal to worship the Roman gods.*

## Roman Virtues?

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Roman culture honored what it called virtue. The Latin word *virtus* originally meant manliness or bravery in battle but came to be applied more broadly to any traits which were considered good. Rome exalted duty, courage, and sacrifice, but above all it honored Rome itself (meaning the empire) as worthy of all devotion.

However, many Romans were far from what we would call virtuous. Immorality, adultery, and homosexuality were common and accepted. Divorce was rampant. Events at the Colosseum displayed a penchant for cruelty. As time went on, people

became more interested in pleasing themselves than in doing what was best for the country. Many virtues were based on the strength of the family and the country. When these failed, so did the virtues.

The Romans had a belief system that was not revealed to them by God. Instead, they made it up themselves. The result was that some virtues were honored and others were not. The Christian emphasis on personal morality was a striking contrast to the Roman worldview. Christian evangelists found quite a challenge presenting to the Romans the gospel of a crucified and resurrected Jew, who wanted them to abandon belief in all other gods and live a life of purity and self-sacrifice.

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*Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.*  
*Philippians 4:8*

## Assignments for Lesson 49

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**Bible** Read Romans 9-12. Commentary available in *Student Review*.

**In Their Words** Read the excerpt from *The Training of Children* (page 70).

**Literature** Continue reading *Julius Caesar*.

**Student Review** Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 49.



*Detail from The Pearl of Great Price, Domenico Fetti (Italian, c. 1615)*

## Lesson 50 - Bible Study

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# The Kingdom of God

**A**n observer in the Roman Forum remarked that the “merchandise of the whole world” could be found in that one spot. A second century AD visitor to Rome spoke of the “endless flow of goods” that came into the city. Supporting this world-wide trade was the best-trained and best-equipped army the world had ever known. The Roman emperor ruled a huge area that extended around the Mediterranean Sea and into Europe and the Middle East. He had a network of governors and other representatives in all of the major provinces. Rome had been growing and expanding for centuries and appeared to be invincible.

### The Nature of the Kingdom of God

As this greatest of all empires held sway over tens of millions of people, another kind of kingdom emerged from an out-of-the-way place on the eastern Mediterranean coast. It was a kingdom based on a different kind of power. This kingdom had a different kind of beginning and existed for a different purpose.

The story of the New Testament is in great measure the story of these two kingdoms: one large, and one like a mustard seed; one based on military might, and one based on self-giving love; one that

seemed unconquerable, and one that seemed weak and fragile. One was the kingdom of Rome, the other was the kingdom of God. In this lesson we will examine the nature of God’s kingdom and see its true and lasting power.

The kingdom of God is where God is King. It is not a geographical realm like Great Britain or the Roman Empire; it is a spiritual kingdom. One person can be in the kingdom of God and the person next to him not be in it. When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman governor thought in geographical and political terms when he asked, “Are you the King of the Jews” (John 18:33). Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). He admitted to being a King, but His realm was not any kingdom that Pilate could understand. Jesus’ kingdom does not operate the way that worldly kingdoms do.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. A mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds, yet the bush it produces is far out of proportion to the size of its beginning (Matthew 13:31-32). In the same way, the kingdom of God started out small, but its reach and impact have been dramatic and global. The kingdom of heaven is like leaven in a lump of dough (Matthew 13:33). Its influence might not be obvious and direct, but it is real nonetheless.



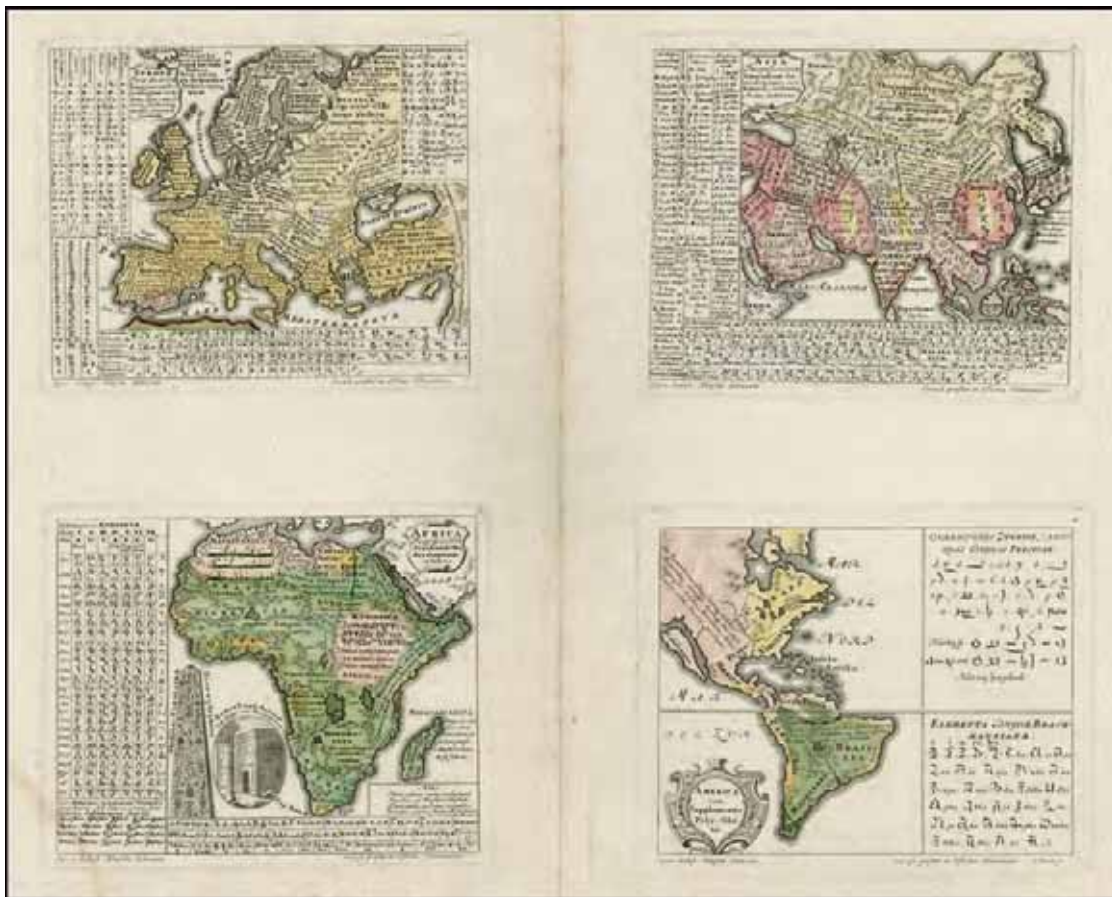
The kingdom of God does not arrive with an army and royal regalia. It cannot be located on a map. The kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:21). If you want to find the kingdom of God, you have to look in the hearts and lives of people.

You cannot purchase or earn your way into this kingdom. Instead, you must accept it as a little child, or you will not enter it at all (Luke 18:16-17). Membership in the kingdom of God is on God's

terms, not ours. We are not in charge; we must accept God's rule with a trusting and willing heart the way a child trusts his parents. Our citizenship in the kingdom of God is not something we earn. It is accomplished for us by the One who transfers us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of the Son (Colossians 1:13). A person can be born into an earthly kingdom, but citizenship in God's kingdom requires being born again (John 3:3-5).

## The Lord's Prayer

*In the Model or Lord's Prayer, Jesus stated "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). These two phrases should be understood as saying the same thing. The prayer is for God's kingdom to come; in other words, for God's will to be done on earth the way that it is done in heaven. God's kingdom has come into this world, but people still need to let God's kingship come into their hearts. We show that God is our King when we do God's will.*



*This set of illustrations is from the 1741 book *Synopsis Universae Philologiae* by Gottfried Hensel. It shows his understanding of the distribution of languages across Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Americas. The first phrase from the Lord's Prayer is printed in many of the languages.*

The kingdom of God is not a political realm, but it does have ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Every Christian is to be a personal representative of his King. When we live as His representative, we are likely to be persecuted the way our King was; but when this happens, we will know most assuredly that we belong to His kingdom (Matthew 5:10).

### Now and Not Yet

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At times the New Testament refers to the kingdom of God as a present or immediate reality. Jesus said, “If I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Luke 11:20). He told His disciples that some who were with Him would see the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1). Other passages in the New Testament, however, speak of the kingdom as a future reality. Paul encouraged some persecuted disciples by saying, “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). James said that Christians are heirs of the kingdom, suggesting that the kingdom is an inheritance which Christians have not yet received (James 2:5).

The kingdom of God is a real presence now, but it will be an even greater and more glorious reality in the future. God is working now. He is King in the hearts of some people now. However, His reign will be unquestioned and overwhelmingly glorious with the coming of Christ in the future.

### The Kingdom of God and The Kingdom of Rome

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The New Testament teaches that, in some ways, no conflict existed between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Rome. When someone asked Jesus if the Jews should pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus replied by saying, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21). The coins were Roman coins and had Caesar’s image on them, so paying taxes with them was no big deal.

The more important matter to Jesus was giving to God what has His image, namely ourselves (Matthew 22:21). Paul, despite being jailed and beaten by government officials several times, said that Christians were to be in subjection to the governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7). In general, a Christian should have no conflict about obeying the government.

However, in the bigger picture God’s kingdom and Rome’s kingdom were locked in mortal conflict because of their absolutely opposite natures. Rome was pagan and of the world, while the Way of Jesus was from God. When Pilate had the sign posted on Jesus’ cross that said, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Matthew 27:37), Pilate was giving one final, hateful kick to Jesus. The sign was saying, in effect, “This is what happens to the King of the Jews when Rome is in charge.” In the book of Revelation, Rome is the great enemy. It is described as the beast and the mother of harlots (Revelation 17:1-18).

The contrast between Caesar and Christ was a choice between two lordships. The Roman emperor eventually was considered to be divine and was called *dominus* (Latin for lord). The claim of the gospel is that Jesus is *kyrios* (Greek for lord). The people of the first century had to choose: was Caesar lord, or was Jesus Lord?

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*Dozens of catacombs have been discovered in Rome. They were neither built by nor used exclusively by Christians, but many of them are illustrated with paintings such as this one of a woman praying (c. fourth century AD).*



In the first century, Rome appeared to be invincible. The city was called “Eternal Rome.” The Empire appeared to have all that it needed to survive indefinitely. The church, by contrast, was tiny and struggling. When Christianity came to be seen as a religion separate from Judaism and not just a Jewish sect, it was perceived to be a threat to the security of the empire and its members were persecuted.

Today, Rome is a memory of history while the kingdom of God is an active force that has spread around the world. Jesus has been Lord for millions more people than ever confessed Caesar as lord. The Kingdom of God has indeed come with power—the power of the Spirit—just as Jesus said, while the grandeur that was Rome lies in empty ruins. The mustard seed won.

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*The kingdom of the world has become  
the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ;  
and He will reign forever and ever.  
Revelation 11:15*

### **Assignments for Lesson 50**

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**Bible** Read Romans 13-16. Commentary available in *Student Review*.  
Recite or write Romans 5:6-8 from memory.

**In Their Words** Read the excerpt from *The Martyrdom of Ignatius* (pages 71-73).

**Literature** Finish reading *Julius Caesar*. Literary analysis available in *Student Review*.

**Project** Complete your project for the unit.

**Student Review** Optional: Answer the questions for Lesson 50 and for *Julius Caesar*; take the quiz for Unit 10; and take the second history, English, and Bible exams.