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a *Grace Notes* course

# History I

by Warren Doud

## Lesson 8

Roman History (Part 4 of 4)

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## History I

### Lesson 8 - Roman History (Part 4 of 4)

Lesson 8 Quiz ..... 5

#### Instructions for Completing the Lesson

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

##### **Instructions**

1. Read the lesson notes carefully.
  2. Look up and study each passage of the Bible that is mentioned.
  3. Complete the answers to the Questions and send your response to Grace Notes.
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### THE ROMAN EMPIRE (continued)

Augustus (Octavian) restructured Roman government; and until about 180 A.D., the basic pattern of government was his. He introduced the following reforms which had great influence on the development of the Christian church over the first three centuries A.D.:

1. All provinces were placed under the control of the Princeps, who appointed military governors.
2. All provinces were divided into municipalities. All municipal officers were elected by the freeborn citizens of the city, the community enjoying complete autonomy. Imperial officials did not interfere in local matters. Usually, the communities were dominated by their wealthier citizens.
3. Imperial officers appointed to govern the provinces were salaried by Rome. Tax collectors, in particular, were given an annual salary rather than a percentage of the taxes collected. This was done to prevent them from abusing their powers in order to fatten their pockets, and it helped make them more dependent on Rome.
4. Augustus began extensive road building programs and empire-wide postal service. This made for better trade and commerce and for better communications and imperial administration.
5. In order to strengthen his hold on the provinces, August had himself proclaimed a deity. He felt that foreign people would find it easier to obey the commands of a god than those of a conqueror. In Italy, he did not proclaim his divinity because he had a legal right to rule there anyway.
6. Under Augustus, Roman law began to reach maturity. Eminent judges issued *responsa prudentium*, the "answer of the wise", legal opinions on the issues brought before the judges. Gradually, these answers formed a body and philosophy of law and were accepted as precedent for the decision of similar cases. Roman law was based on statutes of the Senate, edicts of the Princeps, the "responsas", and certain ancient customs which had the force of law. The statutes,

edicts, and responsas formed the *ius civile*, the written law of the Empire. The old customs formed the *ius gentium*, the unwritten common law.

7. Roman citizens had the right to appeal to the Princeps from the decisions of local courts, and they were immune from degrading corporal punishments. This raised the dignity of Roman citizenship and established the principle that all Roman citizens, irrespective of social class, were equal before the law.

### THE CITY OF ROME IN BIBLE TIMES

Rome was founded on the Tiber river in 753 B.C. It soon spread to cover seven hills, which were: Capitoline, Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Esquiline, Viminal, and Quirinal. The Roman Forum lay between the Palatine and Capitoline hills and was the center of Roman cultural, civic, and commercial activities.

The finest of Rome's temples, palaces, circuses, baths, monuments, amphitheaters, and imperial buildings were near the Forum. All Roman life centered in this area, and all roads in the empire radiated from the golden milestone located in the Forum. Paul, Peter, and Luke must have been in the forum often; and here Paul may have been tried for his life. The dust and dirt of centuries cover this area now; and earthquake, fire, and time have taken their toll.

There were excavations in Rome as early as the 16th century, with extensive archaeological work being done since then. In the late 19th century, the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology took up the work and have continued to oversee it until the present.

Ancient Rome was a sumptuous and magnificent city. There are many descriptions in history of its magnificence. The Forum measures 240 by 690 feet and was the scene of the trial and death of Julius Caesar and the oration of Mark Antony. The Colosseum, covering six acres, seated 60,000 spectators at gladiatorial contests in which Christians were thrown to wild beasts. The palaces of the emperor and the temple of Jupiter were on the Palatine Hill. More than 250,000

## History I - Lesson 8

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people could watch chariot races at the Circus Maximus.

Near the Forum can be seen the Arch of Titus (Vespasian) which has a sculptured relief of Titus and his legions carrying the sacred vessels from the Temple in Jerusalem after the siege of 70 A.D. Of course, this had not been built when the apostle Paul was alive. Also, the Arch of Constantine is in the area and tells of Constantine's proclamation of 316 A.D. in which he announced that Christianity was to be the official religion of the empire. During the excavation, in 1941, of Ostia, Rome's seaport at the mouth of the Tiber, an inscription was found indicating that in 14 A.D., during the reign of Tiberius, Rome had a population of over 4 million.

Of all the discoveries in and around Rome, the most interesting to Christians and Jews are the Catacombs which lay along the roadways outside the city, but which are never farther than three miles from the old city walls. The origin of these Catacombs is one of the strangest phases of history. They started out as sand pits discovered and exploited by people who needed building materials. The material was actually a combination of volcanic ash and sand, melted enough to cause the particles to adhere to each other. This tufa stone comprised the earth's surface for miles around Rome and was excellent when used in masonry. Many subterranean channels were dug in "mining" this sand.

During the first century, there came tremendous conflict between the young Church and the Roman Empire. The marked characteristic of the empire was tolerance; and the most notable characteristics of the Christian church were its love and benevolence. So, you would think the two would have gotten along well together. They did not, however, because the Christians swore allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord of the lives, and everything else was expected to be subservient to Him. Of course the Romans did not like this.

Also, the church had high standards for moral conduct, and they called for conformity to these standards. They said, "If you expect to be saved, you must conform to Christ's way of life." This

was resented. The church condemned the world and sought to save it, but from the world there came contempt and aversion, followed by persecution.

The Christians were also thought to be very unsocial people. They were considered strange, and were hated as enemies of society. They were simple and moral in their dress, they would not go to games and feasts, they condemned those who sold fodder for the animals which were to be sacrificed to pagan gods. The public began to dread them because they thought the gods would be angry and cause their crops to fail if too many people refused to make offerings. If crops failed, if the Tiber river overflowed, if plagues came, the cry was "Send the Christians to the lions!" Yet the Christians were kind to all who were in trouble, stayed and nursed the sick during the plague when others fled, and lived highly moral lives.

In order to test people's loyalty, the Roman government required that every one appear at certain public places and there burn a pinch of incense to the emperor. The Christians considered this emperor worship, and they wished to worship only Christ. So government authorities began to seek them out and punish them with death. As a protective measure the Christians began to meet and work in secret. They sought refuge in the underground sand pits. With their tools they hollowed out rooms, chapels, and burying places. The Catacombs became their place of safe retreat. They came to live there, to worship there, and were buried there, by the tens of thousands.

The Catacombs were discovered, and excavations begun, in the 16th century. Since 1950 they have been excavated very extensively. Enough information has been gathered to fill many books. About six million people are buried in about sixty Catacombs, fifty-four of which are Christian, and six of which are Jewish. Each of these has an obscure entrance from which a stairway leads down to tunnels and galleries which branch off in all directions creating a network of tunnels and streets on as many as four levels connected by stairways. On each level is an immense maze of

## History I - Lesson 8

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tunnels - so that in all there are about 587 miles of tunnels.

Along the walls of these passageways, or at dead ends, the Christians are buried in wall tombs. Each tomb is closed with tiles or with a marble slab on which the name, and perhaps a portrait, of the deceased appears. Often the walls and ceilings were decorated with paintings of Bible characters, or scenes such as Moses striking the rock, David,

Daniel, Noah, or Jonah - in each case they represented a miraculous deliverance by God. In 1853, the archaeologist DeRossi found a marble slab with the engraving, "Marcus Antonius Rastutus made this sepulchre for himself and his own, who are confident in the Lord."

### History I, Lesson 8 Questions

#### Instructions

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson.

Respond to the questions as required.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to *Grace Notes*.

- If you received an email file containing the questions, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the file. Enter your responses in the reply message. Then SEND the message to *Grace Notes*.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to *Grace Notes* as a file attachment. This is handy, but these lessons will average 100K to 200K in size. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to *Grace Notes* as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to *Grace Notes* in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

**Grace Notes**

**% Warren Doud**

**1705 Aggie Lane**

**Austin, Texas 78757 USA**

Whichever transmission method you use, when *Grace Notes* receives your response, we will send you the next lesson in the series.

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#### Questions on History I, Lesson 8

1. The basic pattern of Roman government, until about 180 AD, had been put in place by [A. Julius Caesar; B. Pontius Pilate; C. Augustus (Octavian); D. Pompey]

Answer:

2. Roman citizens could appeal a decision of a local court, to the \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

## History I - Lesson 8

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3. Military governors were appointed by \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

4. The Apostle Paul was able to escape corporal punishment by the Romans because he [A. was a Roman Citizen; B. was a Pharisee; C. felt he had a good case; D. was friends with the Emperor].

Answer:

5. The City of Rome was located on the \_\_\_\_\_ River.

Answer:

6. All Roman life centered in an area of the city called [A. the Colosseum; B. the Atrium; C. the Forum; D. the emperor's palace].

Answer:

7. As many as \_\_\_\_\_ people could be seated at the Colosseum.

Answer:

8. The chariot races were held at the \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

9. During the first century, and after, many Christians lived in underground caverns called \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer:

10. The Christians in Rome were never required to worship the emperor. [True/False]

Answer:

End of Quiz