

RISE OF THE CHURCH & FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

UNIT 1



St. Peter's, Rome, Italy

Witnesses Unto Me...

In the distant Roman province of Judaea, the Roman Procurator authorized the execution of a man whom local rulers had accused of treason, saying that He called Himself “King”—against the authority of the Emperor, Tiberius Caesar. Rebellions in the Roman Empire were swiftly put down, as, indeed, they needed to be if the far-flung Empire was to function as the controlling government. Thus, the execution of one

KEY CONCEPTS:

- The Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles
- The Roman Emperors
- The Growth of the Persecuted Church
- Dividing & Defending the Empire
- Reasons for the Fall of Rome

man was, to the Romans, both the accepted fate of a rebel and far more efficient than the destruction of an entire nation—which might have been necessary had He not been silenced.

It caused no stir in the center of the Empire—at least, not in the very beginning. The small band of disciples in Judaea was a mere drop of water in the vast Roman ocean, and they were now leaderless. All their hopes for a restored and mighty Kingdom of Israel were as ashes, all their courage had fled with the arrival of the mob. They had believed Jesus was the Messiah, the long-awaited One who would right the wrongs. And to their mind-bending horror, He had been killed—mocked by the crowd and crucified as a common criminal. It was hardly the future they had envisioned while following Him down the dusty road towards Jerusalem. All that remained for them was to wearily and grievously go back to their old lives.

If we could step back into that moment, not knowing anything of the next two thousand years, we would be as bereft as the disciples. The might of Rome was in place to serve, not the needs of conquered people, but the interests of Rome, especially those of the Emperor. Power, fame, and the accumulation of great wealth were as motivating to human beings of the Roman Empire as they are to people today. People served various gods through assorted religious rituals, hoping that they might incur the favor of those gods and deflect their anger, much as people do today. Poverty, hunger, disease and oppression were rampant among the majority of people, without any hope of change. Life was bleak. And for the few who had heard and believed Jesus, hope for something new had died with Him on the cross. Do you see it? Do you grasp the utter hopelessness and despair? It lasted for three agonizingly long days.

The One that had been executed had broken the chains of death.

Suddenly, in a moment, an event rocked the *cosmos*. It turned the disciples' utter mourning into wild rejoicing and set their hearts on fire. The One that had been executed had broken the chains of death. He was *alive* again. But this Life was altogether new and fresh. Jesus appeared, not as a mere revived human who would die again in a few years, but as the resurrected, glorified Messiah alive *forevermore*. What that means is beyond the rational comprehension of any of us, since it is not a common occurrence. In fact, it only happened once. For those who do not believe that the Resurrection occurred, it seems foolishness; an unverifiable, inconceivable, impossible-to-prove event.

But for those disciples who not only saw the risen Jesus, but talked with Him, ate with Him, touched Him, and even observed Him walk into a room with locked doors, the reality of His Resurrection was incontestable.

Their lives, though, were not merely changed by seeing the risen Jesus. There was something even more earthshaking yet to come, something that would literally transform them into fearless, death-defying witnesses of their Messiah. Jesus had told them, in Acts 1:8, “...*You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” So they obediently went back to Jerusalem, after His ascension into the heavens, and waited. What they were waiting for was, again, beyond their comprehension, because it had never happened before. But it had been prophesied. Several hundred years earlier, Joel had written: “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh.*” And on the Day of Pentecost, that is exactly what happened. Suddenly, the words of Scripture came to life: “*I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them*” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

What did it look like when these first human beings were filled by the Spirit of God, when He took up residence in them? They began to speak of the wondrous works of God in joyous exuberance (it looked like drunkenness to scoffers), and residents of many nations miraculously understood them *in their own language*. And then, Peter—the same one who, just a short time prior, had three times denied even knowing Jesus—powerfully explained to the gathered throng in the street what they were seeing and hearing. He finished his extemporaneous sermon with the words, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*” The writer of Acts tells us that the people, when they heard those words, were cut to the heart, and wanted to know what they could do about it. When Peter told them to repent, about three thousand people gladly did so.

That’s earthshaking. The power of God *dwelling* in human beings is not something to be taken lightly. That is why Paul wrote, in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20,

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“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

Now, when this amazing new era dawned—when God actually dwelt IN His people—it caused a reaction. Some people gratefully received the Good News and were transformed into new creatures in Christ, while others stormed violently against it. As persecution against the fledgling Church broke out in Jerusalem, many believers fled to other lands, taking their witness for Jesus to new places and people.

In a startlingly short time, Christianity could no longer be confined to the outlying Roman provinces but penetrated to the very heart of the Empire, to the city of Rome itself.

At this unique moment in time, all the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea belonged to the *same* empire. It was the first and last time in history for such political unity in the Mediterranean region, and it allowed unprecedented freedom to take the Gospel throughout the world. Think about it: if a country closes its borders to foreigners, then it is very difficult for them to penetrate that country. But when all belong to the same unit—the same empire or federation—then travel *throughout* that unit is simplified considerably, especially when political peace is maintained by a formidable army. And when you consider that most of the urban areas of the first century A.D. (hence the greatest population base during that time) were situated close to the Mediterranean, you realize that God’s timing was, indeed, perfect.

The first major church outside of Judaea was located at Antioch, in the Roman province of Syria. It was comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers, and was the first place where followers of Jesus were called Christians (or, “Christ-followers”). This was during the **Apostolic Age** of the early Church, the time period after Pentecost, when the disciples who had walked with Jesus were still alive. It lasted c. A.D. 35-70 (though the Apostle John is believed to have lived until shortly after the end of Domitian’s persecution of the Church).

It was from this church in Antioch that Paul and his co-laborers were sent out as missionaries to the world. And that world was much bigger than just Asia Minor and the nearby Middle East. On Paul’s second missionary journey, he left these familiar areas and, in obedience to God’s direction, took the Gospel to Europe. In a startlingly short time, Christianity could no longer be confined to

the outlying Roman provinces but penetrated to the very heart of the Empire, to the city of Rome itself.

We know this, because as early as A.D. 64, the Roman Emperor, Nero, was blaming the Christians of Rome for the huge fire that had left much of the city in ashes. The Roman historian, Tacitus, wrote:

To kill the rumors (that he had started the fire) Nero charged and tortured some people hated for their evil practices—the group popularly known as Christians. The founder of this sect, Christ, had been put to death by the governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate, when Tiberius was emperor. Their deadly superstition had been suppressed temporarily, but was beginning to spring up again—not now just in Judaea, but even in Rome itself, where all kinds of sordid and shameful activities are attracted and catch on. First, the authorities arrested those who confessed to being Christians. Then, on information obtained from them, the courts convicted hundreds more, not so much for starting the fire as for their antisocial beliefs. In their deaths they were made a mockery. They were covered in the skins of wild animals, torn to death by dogs, crucified, or set on fire, so that when darkness fell they burned like torches in the night. Nero opened up his own gardens for this spectacle and gave a show in the arena, where he mixed with the crowd, or stood dressed as a charioteer on a chariot. As a result, although they were guilty of being Christians and deserved to die, people began to feel sorry for them. For they realized that they were being killed, not for the public good, but to satisfy one man’s madness.

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This was the first *official* persecution of Christians by the Roman government, and it was limited to the immediate vicinity of Rome. From some of the early Christian writings, this seems to have been the time when both Peter and Paul were executed by the Roman authorities for being Christians. We can tell from Tacitus’ description of Nero’s persecution that the message of Christianity

was creating a strong response among the people who heard it, whether they embraced it or were repelled by it.

It was a time for consolidating and preserving the teachings and traditions of those who had literally walked with Jesus.

The Roman Empire had been governed, up to this point, by one dynasty, from Augustus to Nero, known as the **Julio-Claudian Dynasty**. When Nero died in A.D. 68, civil war broke out when various soldiers proclaimed first one man, and then another, to be emperor. Stability was only regained when a man was chosen to rule who had the respect of everyone. Vespasian, the military commander sent by Nero to quell the Jewish Revolt in Judaea, was proclaimed emperor in A.D. 69. In order to fulfill his responsibilities in Rome, Vespasian left his son to finish the job in Judaea. Thus, it was under the command of Titus that Roman legions devastated Jerusalem, leveling the Temple itself, as Jesus had foretold in Matthew 24:2, “*Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*” This first Jewish War against Rome ended in A.D. 74, with the destruction of Masada.

This period, from the reign of the emperors Vespasian to Hadrian, corresponds in Church history to the **Age of the Apostolic Fathers** (from c. A.D. 70-140). This age is named for the first generation of Christian leaders whose writings inform us of the situation facing the Church after the apostles. It was a time for consolidating and preserving the teachings and traditions of those who had literally walked with Jesus. Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome and Polycarp of Smyrna are three of those named the Apostolic Fathers.

In Rome, Titus reigned as emperor for 2 years after the death of his father in A.D. 79. His younger brother, Domitian, the last of the **Flavian Dynasty**, then became emperor. Domitian, after several years as emperor, launched the second great persecution of the Church in the 90’s A.D. We need to ask, “Why?” since there was no great fire in Rome this time, and no need for Nero’s scapegoat. The answer can be found when we discover that Domitian had added the words, “*Lord and God*” to his *official* title. Think about what that means. This man who ruled an empire was no longer content with the honor, respect and admiration his position held. It was obviously not enough. So, he desired to gain for himself the type of worship that was reserved to gods, not mortals. And, because there were those more than willing to satisfy the ego of a

megalomaniac, an imperial cult of worshipping the emperor developed around him.

In an age of multiple temples devoted to numerous gods, in a time when each conquest of lands and people meant welcoming their religious systems to the other religions of the empire, bringing one more god to the table was not as heinous as it would be today. And, in fact, emperor worship was one means of instilling and verifying loyalty among a religiously and culturally diverse empire. For most people, it wasn't a great difficulty, since it was common to offer worship to many gods, just to make sure one had all the bases covered in the spirit realm. It was an entirely different case, however, for the Christians. They worshipped One God. Domitian didn't see it that way. In fact, he decreed that Christianity was *atheism*. And, because Christians refused to do their *civic duty*—offering incense as worship to Domitian—he persecuted them. Eventually, he himself was killed, assassinated by his own staff.

After the brief reign of an elderly politician, Nerva, the Roman Empire received one of its most renowned rulers, the Emperor Trajan. From A.D. 98 until A.D. 117, Trajan marshaled his legions to war, conquering Dacia (in modern day Romania), as well as Armenia and Mesopotamia. Though this far-eastern boundary began to collapse even before he died, Trajan had extended the Roman Empire to what would be its furthest point.

He also made the first official government ruling concerning Christians and how to deal with them. When the governor of the Roman province of Bithynia wrote to Trajan about this issue, Trajan responded that Christians should not be actively hunted down, and that anonymous accusations against people should not be accepted. If someone was accused of being a Christian, the person should be given the opportunity to disprove it by offering worship to other gods. However, if someone was found guilty of being a Christian, they must be put to death. This became the standard policy of the Roman Empire for the next two hundred years, with exceptions during periods of persecution, when Christians *were* actively hunted down.

Trajan's successor, Hadrian, quickly abandoned the hard won territories of Armenia and Mesopotamia by withdrawing his legions to the border of the Euphrates river. Hadrian did not style himself a military leader like Trajan, and preferred to utilize the more easily defended natural geographic borders like

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the Euphrates. Hadrian was also the emperor who visited the vast realms of the empire in person, in three long journeys which lasted more than a decade. One of the results of this was his decision to build a wall in Britain, Hadrian's Wall, to serve as the northern most boundary in the Roman Empire. Another scheme, less well-received by the local population, was to rebuild Jerusalem as a Roman city, renaming it Aelia Capitolina.

His plan was to build a temple for the worship of Jupiter on the site of the Jewish Temple. When the Jews heard this, and heard Hadrian's decree to abolish circumcision, a violent reaction occurred. In A.D. 132, they rose in revolt against Rome in the *Second Jewish War*. It took three years for Hadrian to end the rebellion, but end it he did. Despite the Jewish efforts under the warrior Bar Kokba, the new city of Aelia Capitolina was built on the ruins of Jerusalem, the pagan temple occupied the site of the old sanctuary, and the name of the Roman province was changed from Judaea to *Syria Palestina*. Jews were forbidden on pain of death to ever set foot again in Jerusalem, except on the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple. On that day, once a year, they were allowed to *pay* for the right to weep at the site of the Temple. Can you imagine how painful and tragic this was for the descendants of Abraham? How much they must have longed for their Messiah to come in power to establish justice?

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Christianity and Judaism had become, by this time, very distinct from one another, even though Judaism was the tree on which Christianity had been grafted. This separateness came from both sides: Judaeans Christians had not joined the Jews in either the First or Second Jewish War, so were seen as traitors by the remaining Jewish community; while Gentile Christians increasingly distanced themselves from Judaism as they sought to explain Christianity to the culture of the Roman Empire in terms of Greco-Roman philosophy. This time period in early Church history is known as the **Patristic Period**, or the **Period of the Ante-Nicene**

Fathers (*ante* meaning *before*, *nicene* referring to the Council of Nicea), and lasted from c. A.D. 140-325. It was a time of increasing persecutions and martyrdoms, and it was also a time when the focus turns to combatting heresies and dissensions in the church. Some of the best known figures from this time are Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Cyprian of Rome.

In the Empire, the first half of the second century was truly the high point in its history. It was a period of prosperity for many, a time of great building projects and acquisitions, with a confidence for the future. Emperor Antoninus Pius reigned from A.D. 138-161, during this golden age of the Roman Empire, and his family's rule is known as the **Antonine Dynasty** which lasts until A.D. 192. His adopted son, the future emperor, Marcus Aurelius, wrote this concerning his father:

He was always equal to any occasion; cheerful, yet long-sighted enough to have all his dispositions unobtrusively perfected down to the last detail. He had an ever-watchful eye to the needs of the Empire, prudently conserving its resources and putting up with the criticisms that resulted. Before his gods he was not superstitious; before his fellowmen he never stooped to bid for popularity or woo the masses, but pursued his own calm and steady way.

Unfortunately, although there was no major war during his reign, there seems to have been a constant state of unrest and fighting along many of the borders of the empire: Mauretania, Germany, Egypt, Greece, Palestina, Dacia. The Golden Age began to lose its luster in light of these rumblings on the frontier.

When Marcus Aurelius came to power (A.D. 161-180), he faced almost continuous warfare during his reign, first on the eastern frontier and then the northern, which he sometimes faced in person. Though he was emperor, concerned with all the day to day business of government, he also managed to go campaigning alongside his troops on the northern borders. Perhaps, however, the most devastating issue of the time for the people of the Roman Empire was an outbreak of the plague, which lasted for several years.

It was during the plague that Christians had an unprecedented opportunity to serve the people around them, both Christian and non-Christian. Since belief in the resurrected Jesus gave hope for life after death to His followers, it was not unusual for them to care for the dying and afflicted, even though it put them at risk. Since the pagan priests and their followers fled the areas

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touched by the plague, as did the local government officials, along with anyone rich enough to do so, it left an opening for the Christians to be the unexpected caregivers. And, with their care, many of the non-Christians whose families abandoned them to die actually *lived* through the plague. As you might imagine, this made a deep impression on these people, with many of them converting to Christianity because they had seen the reality of God's love displayed in His people.

From the death of Marcus Aurelius, things became more and more bleak for the people of the Empire. His successor Commodus (A.D. 180-192) was not interested in governing the empire, but in playing gladiator. With this lack of governing on the part of the emperor, a whole series of intrigues and power grabs began to play out behind the scenes, resulting in his assassination and in civil war.

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A new dynasty, the **Severan Dynasty**, was begun by Septimius Severus, who reigned from A.D. 193-211. After killing off all rivals to the throne, he went to war, against both Parthia and Scotland. Though he made enemies of the political leaders in Rome, the army loved him for his pay raises and for his official change of policy giving soldiers permission to marry wives and live at home. One Roman historian wrote of him, "*For eighteen years he ruled, before making way for his young sons to succeed, bequeathing to them greater wealth than any previous emperor and an invincible army.*"

For his sons, Septimius Severus had provided his formula for success: "*Agree with each other, give money to the soldiers, and scorn all other men.*" The first part of the formula was thrown out when his son Caracalla murdered his other son Geta, after less than a year of co-rule. That was just the beginning of a reign of terror, as Caracalla—in order to feel safe—executed 20,000 people who had supported his brother. However, he did follow the rest of his father's advice, and the Roman soldiers were enthusiastic supporters of this well-paying emperor. It was all for naught when, five years later, one of his own officers assassinated Caracalla.

It went downhill from there, with one short respite during the reign of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222-235), as the Roman Empire erupted into a time of chaos. During this time, many emperors came and went after just a short time of ruling, often dying violent deaths. The Goths, a barbarian people, invaded

the empire in this chaotic period, leaving death and destruction in their wake. As you might imagine, this led increasingly to *destabilization* in many regions, since the Roman legions were unsuccessful in their struggle to keep the Goths outside the borders of the empire. This disorder and chaos affected trade, business, the economy, security, families—in short, all the normal affairs of life for most people.

Christians faced increasing difficulties during this time period as well. In A.D. 249, Emperor Decius made the declaration that all citizens *must* sacrifice to Roman gods. Along with many others, the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Jerusalem were arrested—three of the leading Churchmen in the empire—and two died as a result. Under the Emperor Valerian, Christians were not allowed to assemble for worship, and offending believers had their property confiscated. Those serving in government who were known to be Christians were made slaves under the Edict of Valerian in A.D. 258. It is worth noting that Valerian died the next year, while battling the Persians. Having their emperor killed by a foreign army was a shocking event for the citizens of Rome, but it was also, perhaps, an example of God’s promise to avenge His people.

Things were not stabilized in the Empire until the reign of Diocletian (A.D. 284-305), who ruled for a long time with a firm hand. He recognized that the chaos of the past was caused, in part, by too few rulers for too much territory, so Diocletian worked to reorganize the entire empire, both the political and economic structures. He divided the empire into East and West, and gave each part an Augustus (senior position) and a Caesar (junior position). Significantly, he also increased the size of the army to better defend the borders and he increased the number of governmental workers to better control the people of the empire. A larger army and more bureaucrats meant a larger budget. Budgets meant more money, greater taxes. Are you getting the idea? More control, larger armies, more government involvement, more financial coercion—these were all part of Diocletian’s plan to keep the empire functioning. Perhaps the most oppressive part of this plan was freezing the population in their various occupations. For instance, if your father was a shipbuilder, then

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you became a shipbuilder. If your father was a peasant farmer, you became a peasant farmer. No exceptions.

Diocletian also launched the last and greatest persecution of the Church. Many Christians died throughout the empire in this final Roman attempt to eliminate all traces of Christianity. Churches were burned, along with their copies of the Scriptures. Bishops and church leaders were arrested, and forced to sacrifice to Roman gods or face martyrdom. Eventually any Christian, whether a leader or not, could be subject to arrest and martyrdom.

One of the issues facing the Church in North Africa during and after this persecution was dealing with those who had *lapsed* (or, in some form denied Jesus). There, a bishop who was believed to have handed over copies of Scripture during the Diocletian persecution, ordained another to be bishop of Carthage. This caused a huge controversy. If the one ordaining had lapsed, was this new bishop a *true* bishop? Those who said, “No!” were the *Donatists*, while those who said, “Yes!” were the mainstream *Catholics* (the word *catholic* means *universal*). It not only caused a violent disagreement among believers for a hundred years, it also provided an opportunity for the government of the empire to interfere with the governing of the Church. This happened during the pivotal reign of Constantine.

The government began to involve itself with the issue of who were the right Christians.

Though Diocletian had reorganized the empire, it was not until Constantine’s rule that the empire was fully revitalized. In between these two, civil wars spread over the entire empire as the various Augustii and Caesars vied for power. In fact, though Constantine was made Augustus of the West by the Roman legions in Britain in A.D. 306 (which act was officially recognized in 307), he did not gain control of the entire empire until 324. Meanwhile, in 313, Constantine issued the *Edict of Milan*, which gave legal status to Christianity—meaning that Christians were no longer to be persecuted for their faith. However, as mentioned above, the government began to involve itself with the issue of who were the *right* Christians. When Constantine became Augustus of the West, he had all church property that had been confiscated by the State returned to the Church. In North Africa, the authorities returned the church property to the non-Donatist group. That action inflamed the Donatists, who appealed to Constantine to recognize those who had held to the faith during times of persecution as the real Christians.

When the first Council of Arles, who had been requested by Constantine to investigate the matter, decided against the Donatists, violence erupted. At this point, in 316, Constantine sought to quell the violence by exiling the Donatists and confiscating their church property. In essence, this was the first attempt of a *Christian* ruler (though Constantine's Christianity is hotly debated) to coerce non-conforming Christians back into fellowship with the mainstream of believers. Though Constantine eventually revoked his order and instituted a policy of toleration towards the Donatists, his state-sponsored coercion would bear bitter fruit both in this instance and in the future.

When Constantine reunited the empire in 324, thereby becoming sole emperor, he quickly turned his attention to another controversy dividing the Church. In 325, he called the Council of Nicea to meet and decide whether a priest from Libya, Arius, was right in his assertion that Jesus was not equal to God. In this council, Arius' beliefs were condemned as heresy (though they continued to take root throughout the empire), and the orthodox position on the divinity of Jesus was victorious.

This brings us to the next period of Church history, which is known as the **Post-Nicene Fathers** (A.D. 326—460). With the accession of Constantine, the Church's focus shifts from issues of persecution, martyrdom, and apologetics to defining specific details of Christian doctrine. It is also the time when monasteries become a normal feature of the Church, though the practice of monasticism differs from East to West. The key figures for this historical time are Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, and Chrysostom.

In the empire, another act of Constantine would bear significant fruit in the future: moving the capital city of the empire from Rome in the West to Constantinople, the newly-built city in the East. The declining importance of this Western city foreshadowed the imminent fall of the Western half of the empire, while the Eastern empire continued to glitter, at least in this city, for another thousand years.

Constantine's reign gave the Roman Empire one of its high points. When he died, however, the stability gained through his strength in rulership dissipated among his sons. When Julian, the last of his surviving male relatives, came to power, he sought to undo what Constantine had done in legalizing

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Christianity. Known in history as “The Apostate,” Julian was the last to try to reinstate worship of the old Roman gods. He died in battle against the Persians (or, as some suppose, was murdered) after a reign of only a few years.

The **Valentinian Dynasty** ruled a divided and increasingly fragile empire until Emperor Theodosius I, known as Theodosius the Great, came to power. He was the ruler who outlawed paganism, making Christianity the official religion of the empire. However, his championing of Christianity did not make him beyond the correction of the Church. When he ordered the massacre of the people of Thessalonica as punishment for their murder of his army commander, Ambrose the Bishop of Milan excommunicated him from the Church. The emperor of the Roman Empire was not allowed to enter the church and receive communion until he had done penance for his misdeeds. One sees in this the struggle which will be ongoing between the power of the State and the

power of the Church. At this moment, the emperor (head of the State) submitted to the bishop (a representative of the Church). But things will soon change.

Theodosius was also a military leader, and it was his decision to end a four-year war in the East between Rome and the Visigoths with a peace treaty in A.D. 382 making them *foederati*, or allies of Rome. This allowed the Visigoths to settle inside Roman territory under their own king (rather than merging into the empire as others had done), and to fight under their own leaders as allies rather than as regular legionary soldiers. It was a dangerous move for the empire, and the doors which were opened to the *barbarian* tribes were never to close again.

In A.D. 410, the city of Rome, known as the Eternal City, was sacked and burned by these same Visigoths whom Theodosius had permitted into the empire. It was the first time the city had fallen to invaders in eight hundred years, and when it vio-



Trajan's Column

lently collapsed in flame, the entire empire was shaken to its core. In far away Bethlehem, Jerome (translator of the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible) said, *“My voice is choked, and sobs break my voice as I dictate this letter. The city which has conquered the whole world is itself conquered.”*

The fall of Rome was not the fall of the Church, however. Christianity, which had survived persecutions, martyrdoms, heresies, and divisions under the Roman Empire, would continue to grow and thrive despite this unsettled political climate. Jesus had said, *“...On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). And His word continues.

PHASE 1

KEY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH:

Polycarp

— Disciple of
Apostle John

Justin Martyr

— Greatest
2nd century
apologist

Irenaeus

— First great
theologian
since Apostle
Paul

Eusebius

— “Father of
Church
History”

Athanasius

— Defender of
Orthodoxy

Jerome

— Translated
Bible into Latin

Augustine

— Influential
theologian

➤ *Listen to this!*

• What in the World’s Going on Here? — Part 2

DISC ONE:

— Introduction (track 1)

— The Rise of the Church and the Fall of Rome (tracks 2-5)

• True Tales Complete from the Times of Romans, Reformers, Revolutionaries

DISC ONE:

— “The Canon of Scripture” (track 2)

• That’s Why They Call It Grace (Church History)

DISC ONE:

— “Introduction” through “Sack of Rome” (tracks 1-8)

➤ *Read For Your Life*

• The Holy Bible

— The Main Story: The Book of Acts (suggested reading plan:
one chapter per day for twenty-eight days)

➤ **Talk Together**

• **Opinion Column:**

- What did you find to be the most interesting aspect, or the most fascinating person, you encountered in your introduction to the rise of the Church and the fall of Rome?
- Why do you suppose people used the picture of a fish (an ICHTHUS) to identify themselves to others as Christians? What would have been the possible results had they told anyone they met, “Oh, yes, I am a Christian?”
- The fire that destroyed much of Rome during Nero’s reign caused Nero to need a “scapegoat.” Why do you think he picked on the Christians? Would you want someone like Nero to be the ruler in your country? Why or why not?
- Would you have wanted to be a Roman emperor? Why or why not? What do you think would be some of the difficulties of ruling such a large empire as Rome?
- What do you think this phrase means, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”? What impact do you think it would have had on nonbelievers to see Christians go victoriously and unashamedly to their deaths?
- Mt. Vesuvius erupted in A.D. 79, just nine years after the destruction of Jerusalem. Why do you think the Jews and Christians of the time believed this disaster was a judgment of God on the Romans? Can you think of any time in Scripture where God brought judgment on a culture? What do you think the Romans thought?
- If you had been a non-Roman citizen in a country under the control of Rome, do you think you would have supported the Romans? What reason would you present to your neighbors for your opinion?

KEY PEOPLE IN THE WORLD:

Nero

- Infamous emperor

Vespasian

- Built the Colosseum

Titus

- Captured Jerusalem

Trajan

- Extended the empire

Hadrian

- Strengthened Roman frontiers

Diocletian

- Divided the empire

Constantine

- First Christian emperor

• **Critical Puzzling:**

- Read Acts 6-8, and also Acts 11. From your reading, why do you think many Christians left Jerusalem? What were some of the consequences of their leaving?
- Early in the history of the Church, false teachings or heresies arose. In the audio-recording **That's Why They Call it Grace** several heresies are mentioned, including marcionism (which took away from the Word), montanism (which added to the Word), and arianism (which reduced Jesus to a superhero rather than a member of the triune God). Are you aware of similar heresies today? What do you think are the best tools Christians (of any time period) have for combatting heresy?
- Monasticism began during this time period. Some people left the cities and traveled to the desert and desolate wilderness to be alone with God. As others joined them, they grouped together into the earliest monasteries. What would motivate people during the Roman Empire to leave their homes, friends, and activities to become monks and nuns?
- Jesus told His disciples that, after the Holy Spirit had come upon them, they would be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. How far had the disciples and early converts to Christianity traveled by the end of the Book of Acts? (Hint: For a start, look in your Bible for maps showing Paul's missionary journeys.)
- If you had lived in the time of the Roman Empire, would you have preferred to live close to Rome or far from Rome? Would you have preferred to live in a city or in a rural area? Would you have wanted to be involved in government or not? List your reasons.

➤ **Reviewed Resources for Digging Deeper:**

Choose a few books that look interesting, or find your own.

Code:

AA (all ages)

RA (Read aloud)

E+ (elem & up)

UE+ (upper elem & up)

MS+ (Middle School & up)

HS (high school)

Church History:

The Story of Christianity

by Michael Collins & Matthew Price

A wonderful introduction to the history of Christianity (with information on Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox faiths), this DK book is the best I've seen for a basic overview of the Church through the ages. **UE+**

From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya

by Ruth A. Tucker

This book is “a biographical history of missions” beginning with the Apostle Paul. Though the biographies pertinent to Romans, Reformers, Revolutionaries represent only the first hundred pages, I heartily endorse it for your family bookshelf! It includes a wonderful timeline of missionaries through the ages. **UE+**

2000 Years of Christ's Power—Part One: The Age of the Early Church Fathers

by N.R. Needham

If you want to dig into Church history, this British author provides an amazingly clear, in-depth look at the people and events that make up our Christian heritage. He has taken a complex subject and made it understandable for those of us who are not professional theologians or church historians! (400 pages.) **HS+**

Early Church:

Against the World - The Odyssey of Athanasius

by Henry W. Coray

A biography of “the Father of Orthodoxy,” this book describes the life and work of the man who defended the doctrine of the Trinity. It includes bits and pieces of his writings. **MS+**

Early Christian Writings

Translated by Maxwell Staniforth, Published by Penguin Classics

In these writings of the Apostolic Fathers, you will read accounts of and letters from Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp. It also includes an eyewitness description of the martyrdom of Polycarp. **HS+**

Augustine, The Farmer's Boy of Tagaste

by P. De Zeeuw

This is a children's biography of one of the most influential Christians in history. Worth the search. **UE+**

The Fathers of the Western Church

by Robert Payne

A series of short biographies about several of the most significant men in the early Church through the time of the Middle Ages. Though it is out-of-print, you may be able to find it through interlibrary loan. **HS+**

City of God by Augustine

Written in the A.D. 300's, this book impacted people during the Middle Ages more than any other book except for the Bible. Look for it in your library. **HS+**

Augustine and His World

by Andrew Knowles and Pachomios Penkett

InterVarsity Press has a series of books on Christian history, including this excellent book on Augustine. **MS+**

Roman Empire:

Cultural Atlas for Young People—Ancient Rome by Mike Corbishley

For an overview of Rome, from its beginnings until the latter part of the Empire, this is a wonderful resource. It also includes a geographic look at the various parts of the Roman Empire, including Africa, Britain, Spain, Gaul, Germany, and the Middle East. **UE+**

Famous Men of Rome

by Poland & Haaren

A wonderful collection of short biographies about the most important Romans. A very helpful and worthwhile book to have. **E+**

Galen and the Gateway to Medicine

by Jeanne Bendick

Galen was the preeminent medical researcher of the Roman Empire, whose work influenced the medical profession for the next 1300 years. **E+**

The World of the Roman Emperor

by Peter Chrisp

Looking specifically at the time of the Roman Empire, this beautifully illustrated children's book gives a simple overview of the most famous emperors and an understanding of what life was like during the time of the Roman Empire. **UE+**

The Romans and Their Empire

by Trevor Cairns

One in the series The Cambridge Introduction to History, this is an excellent resource describing the Roman Republic, the Roman Empire, Roman invasion of Britain, and the fall of the Roman Empire. Highly recommended! **UE+**

Make It Work! - The Roman Empire

by Peter Chrisp

An absolutely delightful book to show how to create a hands-on experience when you study Rome. Highly recommended. **AA**

Life of a Roman Soldier

by Don Nardo

Without Rome's soldiers to conquer and subdue everything in sight, the Empire would not have existed. In this thorough book, a student will have the opportunity to discover the realities of life for a Roman soldier. **UE+**

The Annals of Imperial Rome: Tacitus

translated by Michael Grant

Written by the Roman, Tacitus, this amazing book tells the story of the Julio-Claudian emperors from just before the death of Augustus through the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero. If you like to know the details, you'll love this book! **HS+**

Beric the Briton—A Story of the Roman Invasion

by G. A. Henty

Another page-turning suspenseful story by the master of historical fiction for children, this book concerns the impact of the Romans upon what we call England. (It begins slowly, but it really gets exciting!) **UE+**

The Book of Virtues by William J. Bennett***The Moral Compass*** by William J. Bennett

IF you have these books, or IF you have younger children, there are a few great retellings of this part of history in these two books. The story of Androcles and the Lion is found in ***The Book of Virtues*** on pages 118-119. "The Last Fight in the Colosseum" (pages 453-456), "Monica, Mother of Augustine" (pages 540-542), and "Saint Augustine by the Seashore" (pages 744-745) are all found in ***The Moral Compass***. **RA**

The Robe by Lloyd C. Douglas

A classic of fictional literature, this is an excellent way to better understand the conflict between Rome and Christianity. Highly readable! **MS+**

The Roman Colosseum

by Elizabeth Mann

This well-illustrated book tells the story of the building of the Colosseum, built by Vespasian on the site of Nero's hated Golden Palace. It describes not only how the Colosseum was built, but also describes the conditions of Rome that gave life to this place of contested death. Fascinating. **UE+**

Lives of Famous Romans

by Olivia Coolidge

Let's face it. These Romans are not pretty! To read about their lives is helpful but not nice. If you want to know more details than are given in the book listed above, this is a good choice. **MS+**

The Eagle of the Ninth

by Rosemary Sutcliff

This is a fascinating fictional account of a young man's search for the truth about what happened to his father - the commander of the Ninth Roman Legion which disappeared without a trace in the wilds of Britain. It will provide students with a "you were there" experience of ancient Britain and of the Romans who were stationed there. **UE+**

The Silver Branch

by Rosemary Sutcliff

Picking up the threads of the last story, this tale illustrates how quickly Roman Emperors were made and unmade, and the circumstances that led Caesar Constantius (the father of Constantine) to first come to Britain. Fascinating! **UE+**

Destruction of Jerusalem:

Josephus, the Essential Writings translated by Paul Maier

Josephus was an eyewitness of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. He wrote about the devastation he had witnessed as well as the history of the Jews in this original source document commissioned by the Roman Emperor. **HS+**

For the Temple - A Tale of the Fall of Jerusalem by G.A. Henty

This is a riveting, can't-put-it-down fiction book describing the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. One of my son's favorites! Back in print. **UE+**

Video:

How Should We Then Live?

by Francis Schaeffer

The first video in this series vividly portrays the early Church and what it faced. Excellent! **vUE+**

The Robe

I prefer the book, but some people prefer movies... **UE+**

What books did you like best?

The internet also contains a wealth of information about the rise of the Church and the fall of Rome:

What sites were the most helpful?

For more books, use these Dewey Decimal numbers in your library:

Church History:
#270

Persecution in Church History:
#272

Early Church:
#281

Roman Empire:
#937

Student Self-Evaluation: Unit One, Phase One

Dates and hours: _____

Key Concepts:

Rephrase the five concepts of this unit and confirm your understanding of each:

• **The Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles:**

• **The Roman Emperors:**

• **The Growth of the Persecuted Church:**

• **Dividing and Defending the Empire:**

• **Reasons for the Fall of Rome:**

Tools for Self-Evaluation:

Evaluate your personal participation in the discussions of this phase. Bearing in mind that a good participant in a discussion is not always the most vocal participant, ask yourself these questions: Were you an active participant? Did you ask perceptive questions? Were you willing to listen to other participants of the discussion and draw out their opinions? Record your observations and how you would to improve your participation in the future:

Every time period is too complex to be understood in one phase of study. Evaluate your current knowledge of the fall of Rome and rise of the Church. What have you focused on so far? What are your weakest areas of knowledge?

Based on the evaluation of this introduction, project ahead what you would like to study more of in the following phases:

PHASE 2

Exploration & Discovery Week

➤ **Research & Reporting**

Your mission, if you choose to accept it, is to explore one of these areas and to discover something significant!

- **Sharing the Gospel:**

- Using the Book of Acts as your source, research and report on the expansion of the Gospel in the first days of the Church, from the day of Pentecost through Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Show how this began the fulfillment of Jesus' words to His disciples that they would bear witness to Him in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

- **Roman Emperors:**

- Research and report on the Roman Emperors. Since this is a long list - given the short duration of some of the emperors! - you may want to categorize them and then report on some of the main emperors and the various eras of the Roman Empire. Include such details as when they lived, what they accomplished, the length of their reign, and how they died.

- **Roman Empire:**

- Find one of the books listed, or a book of your choice, for basic information on the Roman Empire. Summarize the factors that led to the Pax Romana and the factors leading to Rome's fall. Report your findings.

- **The Early Church:**

- Find one of the books listed, or a book of your choice, for a basic introduction to Early Church history. Report what you discover about the growth of Christianity from a small Jewish sect in Judea to the dominant religion of the Roman Empire.

- **Pompeii:**

- Look up information on Pompeii and Mt. Vesuvius, the volcano whose eruption buried the Roman city. When did Mt. Vesuvius erupt? What were the results? What have archaeologists discovered about Pompeii, and, correspondingly, about Roman times? What historic accounts exist about the destruction of Pompeii and what do they tell us? Perhaps you will want to include the viewpoint of Christians of the time.

- **Countries of the Empire:**

- What regions beyond the country of Italy were under the control of the Roman empire? Investigate when and how these other countries were brought under the dominion of Rome, and when and how they regained their freedom.

• **East and West:**

— Investigate the results of Diocletian's division of the Empire into East and West. Delineate the flow of authority in this new division. Describe how Constantine utilized this delineation to declare himself Emperor, and how he came to power.

• **Ptolemy:**

— Investigate Ptolemy's life and work in astronomy, geography, and math. How were his maps used in the late Middle Ages?

• **Constantine & Constantinople:**

— Research and report on this first *Christian* emperor of Rome. What were the factors leading to his championing Christianity? How did Constantine impact the Church? What led to his creating the new capital city of Constantinople? How was this city different than all the other cities of the Empire, and how does that demonstrate the influence of Christianity upon Constantine? Why was this such a geographically important city?

• **The Catacombs:**

— Find out more about the catacombs of Rome. When were they used, and who used them? What was their purpose? What kind of information has been found in catacombs for archaeologists to study? How has this helped us better understand the conditions of the early Church? Report your findings.

• **Invasion of Britain:**

— Explore and discover the Roman invasion of Britain in 43 A.D. What did Emperor Claudius accomplish? (Hint: Look up the city of Colchester.) Who was Boudicca (or *Boudicea*)? Why did her tribe revolt against the Romans? When and why did the Roman troops eventually leave? What was the result of their departure?

• **Martyrdom:**

— Research and report on martyrdom in the early Church. Describe the various times of persecution under the various emperors:

- *Was it localized in one area?*

- *What triggered the persecution?*

- *What was the attitude of the Church toward those who denied their faith?*

• **Christianity as the Official Religion:**

— Research and report on Emperor Theodosius, who, as Emperor in the East, issued an edict announcing that all citizens in his domain were to become Christians. As Emperor of both East and West, he also made paganism illegal. Describe the impact of these decisions on the Church and on the Empire.

- **Roman Soldiers:**

— Investigate what life was like for a Roman soldier during the Roman Empire. What type of equipment did they use? How did they live on campaign? What were the typical conditions of life in a Roman fort? What were the typical possessions of a soldier? What is the difference between a legionary and an auxiliary soldier?

- **Early Church Fathers:**

— Investigate the lives of the Western and/or Eastern Church Fathers. Describe where they lived, the region they served, the era of their lives during the Roman Empire, and what was most distinguishing about them within the Church. You may want to go through the list of Key People within the Church to get an idea of where to start.

➤ **Brain Stretchers**

- **The High Point of the Roman Empire:**

— The second century is considered by many to be the brightest and best time of the Empire. Research and report on the factors that made this time period the high point: the emperors, the provinces, the trade, the succession (after the death of an emperor), the stability.

- **Christianity in Britain:**

— What are some of the theories of how Christianity first came to Britain? To get you started, consider the story of Joseph of Arimathea in Britain, and the similarity between Celtic Christianity and Eastern Orthodox Christianity.

- **Early Monasticism:**

— Research and report on the desert monks of the Early Church. What were some of the similarities as well as differences among the various desert hermits and monks? Be sure to include a description of the life of Jerome.

- **Arianism versus Orthodoxy:**

— Investigate the claims of Arius concerning the nature and person of Jesus. What made Arianism appealing to the masses? Who championed orthodoxy? At what Church Council was Arianism declared a heresy? Report your findings.

- **Apologetics:**

— Many of the early Christians were “apologists.” They defended Christianity to the Romans through the use of brilliant arguments and insightful writings. Research and report on Athenagoras, Mark Felix, Justin Martyr, Lactantius, or Tertullian. (Hint: Books on early Christian writers will be your best source.)

Create Your Own Research Topic:

➤ **Words to Watch**

Remember—The easiest way to learn a subject is to master its terms:

colosseum	sack	ichthus
heresy	persecution	martyrdom
aqueduct	edict	apostolic
centurion	dispersion	apologetics
legion	conversion	consecrate
hymns	Pax Romana	monasticism

Other words you need to look up:

To boost your vocabulary, try this:

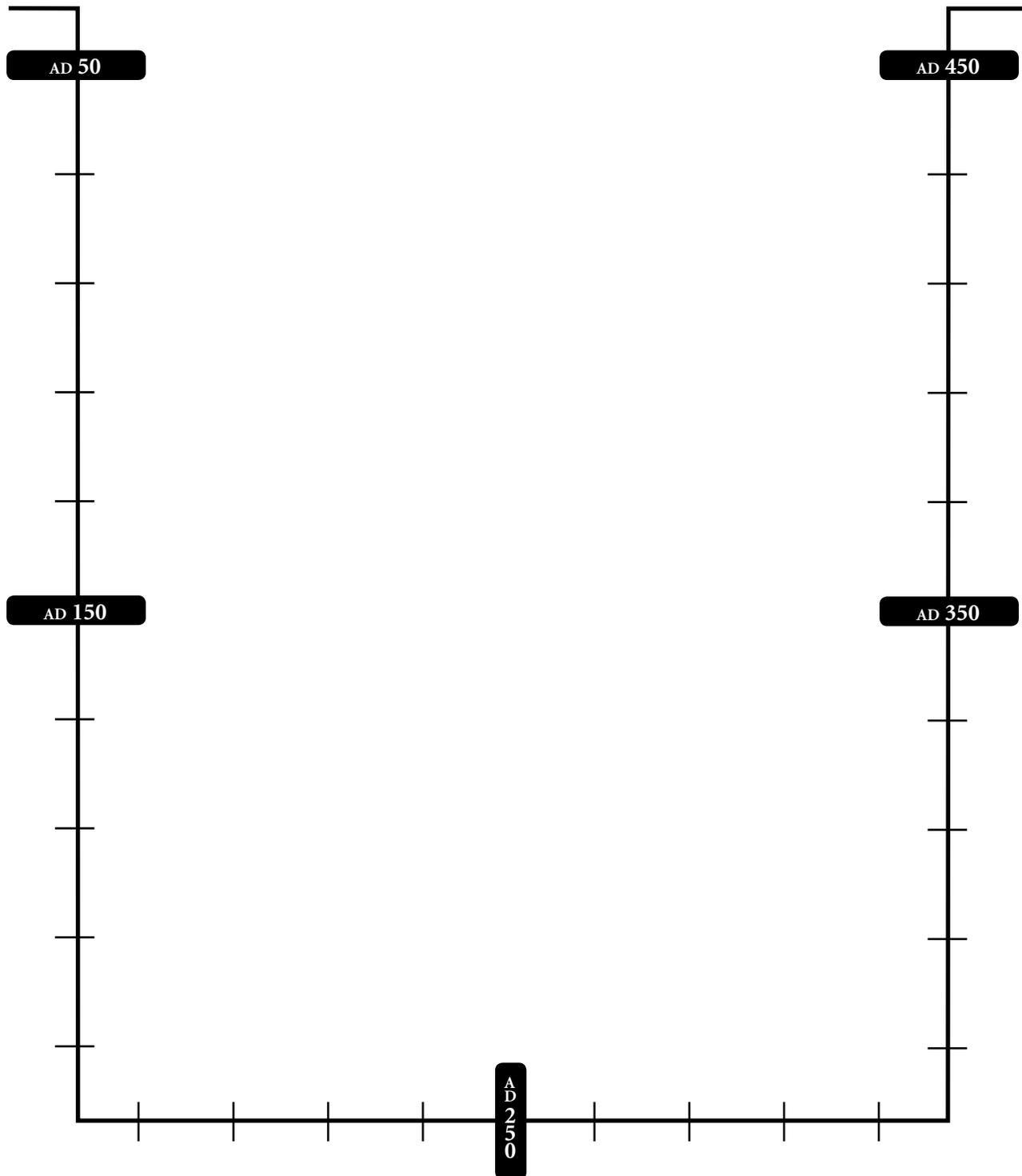
- Locate a book of Latin root words in the library, or “Rummy Roots” (a Greek-Latin root word card game), and learn twenty Latin root.
- Extra Credit: Learn forty Latin roots.
- Abundant Credit: Learn sixty Latin roots.

If you have enjoyed learning roots, you might want to go ahead and study Latin itself!

Consider:

Latin was the language of the Roman Empire. As the Empire disintegrated, the use of Latin waned, except in the Church. However, the language of Latin continued on in a foundational form in many western languages, including English.

➤ *Timeline*



 **Consider this for your Timeline:**

The growth of the early Church was affected by the persecution of the Church. On your timeline, you might want to color in the main years of the persecutions under Roman emperors, ending with the year that Constantine became ruler over the Empire. As you enter the major emperors and the major Christian figures during this time of persecution, the connection between the rise of the Church and the fall of Rome should become more vivid. Also consider the expansion and recession of the Roman Empire, and shade your timeline appropriately to show this.

KEY DATES:

- **Apostle John**
- **Theodosius**
- **Key People in the Church list**
- **Domitian**
- **Marcus Aurelius**
- **Key People in the World list**

Student Self-Evaluation: Unit One, Phase Two

Dates and hours: _____

Research Project:

Summarize your research question:

List your most useful sources by author, title and page number where applicable (continue list in margin if necessary):

Now take a moment to evaluate the sources you just listed. Do they provide a balanced view of your research question? Should you have sought an additional opinion? Are your sources credible (if you found them on your own)? Record your observations:

Evaluate your research project in its final presentation. What are its strengths? If you had time to revisit this project, what would you change? Consider giving yourself a letter grade based on your project's merits and weaknesses.

Letter grade: _____

You have just completed an area of specific research in the time of the fall of Rome and rise of the Church. Now what would you like to explore in the upcoming phases? Set some objectives for yourself:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

PHASE 3

The Hands-On Week

➤ *Maps and mapping*

- **Physical Terrain:**

- Label and color the land of Palestine, which was the scene of Titus' triumph in AD70 at the destruction of Jerusalem.
- Label and color the land of Egypt, which contained one of most important cities of the Roman Empire and the early Church.
- Label and color the “boot” of Italy, which was the center of the Roman Empire.
- Label and color the land of Asia Minor and Syria, which contained many important cities in the Roman Empire, and one of the most important of the early Church.

- **Geo-Political:**

- Draw the boundaries of the Roman Empire under Trajan.
- Label the location of the five most important cities in the early Church: Jerusalem, Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and Constantinople.
- Draw the travels of Emperor Hadrian to Gaul, Britain, Dacia, Egypt, Sicily, Spain, and North Africa.
- Draw the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul.

- **Explore:**

- ***Christian Outreach:*** What is the status of evangelical outreach today to Egypt, Asia Minor, and Israel (the sites of the four eastern metropolitan cities of the early Church)? What opportunities and what difficulties face those who share the Gospel in these areas?
- ***Trade in the Empire:*** What products did Rome import from its outlying regions? Are these products still being exported from these regions? Investigate the sea routes and land routes for trade in the empire.



Consider:

*Mosaics were used by the Roman people to decorate floors and walls in their homes. Many different scenes were created in mosaics, including a mosaic from Pompeii of a snarling dog, with the inscription *cave canem* —“beware of the dog.”*

➤ **Art Appreciation**

- **Mosaics from Pompeii**

This art dates from the first century and reflects the style of the early Roman Empire.

- What are the subjects of the mosaics? What does this show about the Roman people of the time?
- What words could you use to describe the mosaic style of art?

- **Catacomb of St. Calixtus in Rome - Jonah and the Whale**

- How would you describe the style of painting used by the catacomb artist?
- Why do you think the catacomb painters painted Biblical scenes?

➤ **Architecture**

This is the time of the Christian basilica style of architecture. The basilica was derived from Imperial Roman architecture, which was itself a development from the covered markets of the Roman Republic.

- Look for images of St. Paul’s Outside-The-Walls. This is a basilica built over the site of St. Paul’s tomb in Rome. It was built about the time of Constantine, and is Roman-style architecture borrowed for use by the Church. How would you describe this building?

Don’t forget to look for pictures of the mosaics inside the building.

➤ **Arts in Action**

Select one, and let your artistic juices flow!

• **Catacomb Painting:**

— Start by setting up an easel with blank paper (or secure the paper to a hard surface on the wall). Work in a dark room, with someone holding a flashlight to illuminate your painting. Using earth-tone paints, crayons, or markers, try to create a scene that tells a Bible story.

• **Mosaics:**

— Make a small mosaic using white poster board as the base and colored card stock cut into small squares for the tesserae. Draw a design on the poster board, and then fill it in by gluing the card stock squares in the design.

➤ **Science**

Ptolemy, who lived in Alexandria in the second century A.D., was an amazing astronomer, geographer, and mathematician. It was his Ptolemaic System which proclaimed the theory that the earth was the center of the universe. This was believed until Copernicus showed, in the sixteenth century, that the sun—not the earth—is the center of the solar system.

Ptolemy also made a map showing everything that was known about the geography of the world at that time. He made errors, but that was fortunate for us all, since his estimate of the distance going west from Europe to China was what encouraged Columbus to make his historic voyage!

• **Flat to Round:**

— How do you make a flat map of a round world? That is the difficulty all map makers face. Try this activity to get a sample of their plight. Blow up a balloon. With markers, make a face on the balloon. Next, have a brave child pop the balloon with a pin. Then, using scissors, cut off a tiny piece at the top and the bottom so that it leaves a rectangle. What does the face look like now?

- **Create a Globe:**

— Do the same project listed above, except draw the continents as found on a globe instead of a face. When it is in the shape of a rectangle, how distorted are the continents? Now, looking at a map of the world and observing how the map makers deal with the distortions caused by putting a curved shape on flat paper, draw the continents again, but on a flat surface. *Activity ideas courtesy of Cindy Wiggers, Geography Matters.*

➤ **Music**

Consider:

No musical instruments were used in the Early Church, as believers associated musical instruments with pagan worship and with Jewish worship, but not with the apostolic traditions or teachings.

One of the most fascinating and least studied aspects of Church history is the story of music within the Church. It shouldn't surprise us to discover that, in addition to singing the Psalms, there were also wonderful songs of worship to God that were written by some of the earliest Christians. Now they didn't have recording equipment, and the melodies were not written down, so we are not sure of what the melodies sounded like. And the first hymn writers didn't speak English. The result is that we have translations of songs from Latin and Greek, put to melodies from later centuries. However, it is eminently satisfying to sing a song of praise and worship that was conceived in someone's heart nearly two thousand years ago!

- **Discover:**

— *O Splendor of God's Glory Bright* by Ambrose of Milan (A.D. 340-397)

“Ambrose for bishop” was the cry of the people of Milan, though Ambrose was not yet ordained. He was the greatest churchman of his day, and was largely responsible for winning over Augustine to Christianity. He introduced congregational singing to the Western Church, and his own hymns became very popular throughout western Europe.

— *Lord Jesus, Think on Me* by Synesius of Cyrene (A.D. 375-430)

Synesius was one of the last great citizens of this ancient city. He was descended from Spartan kings, as well as being an educated, wealthy man. A friend of St. Augustine of Hippo, Synesius became bishop of Cyrene about A.D. 410.

• **Listen:**

All Glory, Laud, & Honor music CD:

— *Lord Jesus, Think On Me*

• **Try This:**

— Gather a group and have a “Hymn Sing” with as many hymns or Scripture songs as you can find. But, to imitate the style of the Early Church, you must sing these songs unaccompanied AND you must stand the whole time!

Until the 1300’s, church services in the West did not include pews—everyone stood throughout the entire service. Church pews were NEVER introduced into the Eastern Church.

➤ **Cooking**

• **Challah Bread**

5 1/2 - 6 1/2 cups flour	1 cup warm water
3 tbsp. sugar	4 eggs (room temperature)
1 1/2 tsp. salt	1 tsp. cold water
1 pkg. dry active yeast	1/2 tsp. poppy or sesame
1/2 cup butter, softened	seeds

Combine 1 1/4 cups flour, sugar, salt, and yeast in a large bowl. Mix in the softened butter. Slowly add warm water to the flour mixture and blend thoroughly. Beat for two minutes

with mixer at medium speed, scraping the bowl occasionally. Separate the yolk and white of one egg. Blend the single egg white and the other three whole eggs into the batter. Reserve the single egg yolk. Stir 1/2 cup of the flour into the batter and beat at high speed for two minutes, scraping bowl occasionally. Blend in enough additional flour to make a soft dough. Knead the dough on a lightly floured board about 8 to 10 minutes, or until it is smooth and elastic. Place the dough in a greased bowl, turning it once to grease the top. Cover and allow the dough to rise in a warm, draft-free place until double in bulk (approximately one hour).

On a lightly floured surface, divide the dough into two equal portions. Divide each of those portions into two unequal pieces, so that you have 1/3 of the dough for one piece and 2/3 of the dough for the other. Divide one of the larger pieces into three equal portions. Roll each of these into 12-inch ropes. Braid the lengths together tightly, using the fingers to press the dough together at the ends. Divide the smaller piece into three equal portions. Roll each of these into 10-inch lengths and braid tightly. Place the smaller braid on top of the larger one and seal the ends. Repeat this process to form the second loaf.

Place both braided loaves on a greased baking sheet. Mix the reserved single egg yolk with one tsp. cold water and brush the tops of the loaves with this mixture. Sprinkle with the poppy or sesame seeds, and let the loaves rise until double in bulk in a warm, draft-free place (approximately one hour). Bake in a preheated 400 degree oven for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool on racks.

Student Self-Evaluation: Unit One, Phase Three

Dates and hours: _____

Evaluate your projects:

List which of the activities listed in this phase you did:

Rate your enthusiasm: _____

Explain: _____

Rate the precision of your approach: _____

Explain: _____

Rate your effort towards the completion of the project: _____

Explain: _____

Ask yourself what worked and what did not. What would you do differently in the future, and what would you repeat?

How specifically did these hands-on activities enhance your knowledge of the fall of Rome and rise of the Church? What made them worthwhile?

In the first three phases of this unit, what aspect of the time period has most captured your imagination? What would you like to creatively pursue to conclude your study?

PHASE 4

The Expression Week

➤ *In Your Own Way...*

We have seen the supernatural power of God displayed as Christianity has grown from a backwater Jewish sect to the favored religion of the Roman Emperor, Constantine. This has been a time of dynamic growth for the early Church, despite fearful persecution, and it has also been a time of gradual decline in the formidable Roman Empire. Now, choose a selection of these activities, or create your own, which will best express what you have learned from this unit.

Linguistics:

• Journalism:

- Write an article for the “Christian Insider,” a magazine specially devoted to up-to-the-minute reports on the Church in the Roman Empire. Your editor has assigned you to cover the events of Constantine’s battle at the Milvian Bridge.
- You are a Roman television reporter from the “All Around the Empire” news show. Interview Polycarp in order to discover why on earth this elderly, seemingly respectable man, won’t recant his “atheistic” religion.

• Poetry:

- Write an ode to Rome’s Emperors, including: Augustus, who said he found Rome a city of sun-dried bricks and left her clothed in marble; Caligula, who threatened to give his favorite horse the political position of consul; Nero, who won a chariot race at the Olympic games; Hadrian, who traveled with his own team of architects; Diocletian, who styled himself as a Persian king—with people kneeling before him and kissing the hem of his robe; and Constantine, who oversaw the Church Council of Nicea just a few short years after the worst Empire-wide persecution of Christians.

• **Prose:**

— You have recently been assigned to a legion of soldiers stationed in Britain. Write a letter home to the folks to describe this island, and the people who live here. Be sure to include descriptions of the unpredictable voyage.

• **Playing with Words:**

— Finish this limerick:

*There once was a bad guy named Nero,
Who ended his life as a zero...*

Art:

• **Illustration:**

Romans used storytelling reliefs to describe their mighty triumphs in battle. Emperor Trajan had a massive column created (almost 100 feet tall) which depicted his victory over the Dacians.

— Using Trajan’s Column as a model, create a comic-strip showing one of the Roman emperor’s lives, whether his battles, his noteworthy accomplishments, or his struggle to keep the throne.

• **Mosaics:**

— Create a mosaic with a Bible story as the subject, which would be similar to mosaics created by early Christians.

• **Political Cartooning:**

— Emperor Hadrian had a huge wall built in England to protect the Empire from barbarians. Draw a political cartoon showing how effective Hadrian’s Wall was when it came to keeping out the Picts and Scots!

• **Sculpting:**

— Create a statue (head and shoulders) in the manner of the Romans, who did not create flawless-looking individuals, but actually enjoyed showing the characteristics (imperfections included) of the person being sculpted.

Music:

• **Performance Practice:**

— With your teacher’s help, select an appropriate piece of music which expresses some element of the early Church: the love feasts, the secrecy, the persecution, or the joyful courage of these believers. Prepare and perform the piece for an audience. Communicate with your audience the reason for your selection either in the program notes or in a short speech.

• **Compose:**

— Write a song based on the Nicene Creed, to be used in worship. The emphasis, remember, is on who Jesus is—of the same substance as the Father, begotten not made, very God of very God.

Drama:

• **Comedy:**

— Enact the real-life difficulties of one who lived close to the Roman baths—especially if trying to take a nap. Use this quote from Seneca, writing in Rome in the first century, to get you started:

“I live over the public baths—you know what that means. Ugh! It’s sickening. First there are the strong-men doing their exercises and swinging heavy lead weights about with grunts and groans. Next the lazy ones having a cheap massage—I can hear someone being slapped on the shoulders. Then there’s the man who always likes the sound of his own voice in the bath. And what about the ones who leap into the pool making a huge splash!”

• **Reality:**

— Pick several scenes from the book of Acts and weave them together into a play about the beginning days of the Church.

• **Puppetry:**

— Put on a puppet show of Constantine at the Milvian Bridge. Be sure to include his vision on the night before this famous battle.

Prop Needs:

Costume Ideas:

Role/Player:

Set Suggestions:

Movement:**• Pantomime**

— Pantomime the Emperor Claudius successfully invading the country of Britain, and then riding in triumph on an elephant to the city of Camulodunum (now known as Colchester). His stay in Britain was only sixteen days, so do the whole thing quickly.

• Dance

— Choreograph a dance which shows the strong yet graceful aqueducts built by the Romans, and their role in conveying clean water from the high hills to the cities.

For inspiration, look for a photo of the Pont du Gard at Nîmes, France.

• **Action**

— Demonstrate with movement the elements of a Church service during the time of the early Church. Show what activities were open to non-baptized people, and at what point only those who had received baptism were allowed to remain. It will be more appealing visually if you are able to find and use appropriate props.

Conceptual Design:

• **Create-a-Game:**

— Demonstrate to younger children the explosion of the early Church from a small group of disciples waiting in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to a widespread, influential gathering of believers who, by A.D. 64, have “turned the world upside down”—to the point that there are even believers in the Roman Emperor’s household—by creating a game which shows the progression of these miraculous events.

Create Your Own Expression:

Student Self-Evaluation: Unit One, Phase Four

Dates and hours: _____

Evaluate your projects:

What creative project did you choose:

What did you expect from your project, and how does the final project compare to your initial expectations?

What do you like about your project? What would you change?

In Conclusion:

Revisit the five concepts from the beginning of this unit. Explain how your understanding of and appreciation for each has grown over the course of your study.

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Record your concluding thoughts on the fall of Rome and rise of the Church:

