



*The Story  
of the  
Church:  
Background Of  
Its Birth  
Randy Broberg*

# Introduction: Why Me?



- I'm not a Professor
- I'm not a Preacher
- I'm an Attorney!
- But... Once upon a time...
- Double Major at Stanford in European History and in Classical Studies
- American School of Classical Studies, Athens Greece
- Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies, Rome Italy
- Years of watching the "History Channel"!

# Introduction:

## Why Take This Course?

- Understand your own Church better, how it's run, how you worship, and why you do what you do.
- Understand what other churches teach, like those your friends and relatives may belong to.
- Be able to give an answer to those who ask about your beliefs or about Church history
- Understand better what's "Biblical" vs. mere tradition!

“Not to know what took place before you were born is to forever remain a child”

Cicero

Statute of Julius Caesar  
Geneva, Switzerland



# Introduction:

## Recurring Themes to Watch

- Church Governance
- Church State Relations
- Baptism
- Lord's Supper
- How we are saved
- Methods of Worship
- Role of Women
- Church Discipline and treatment of those who disagree



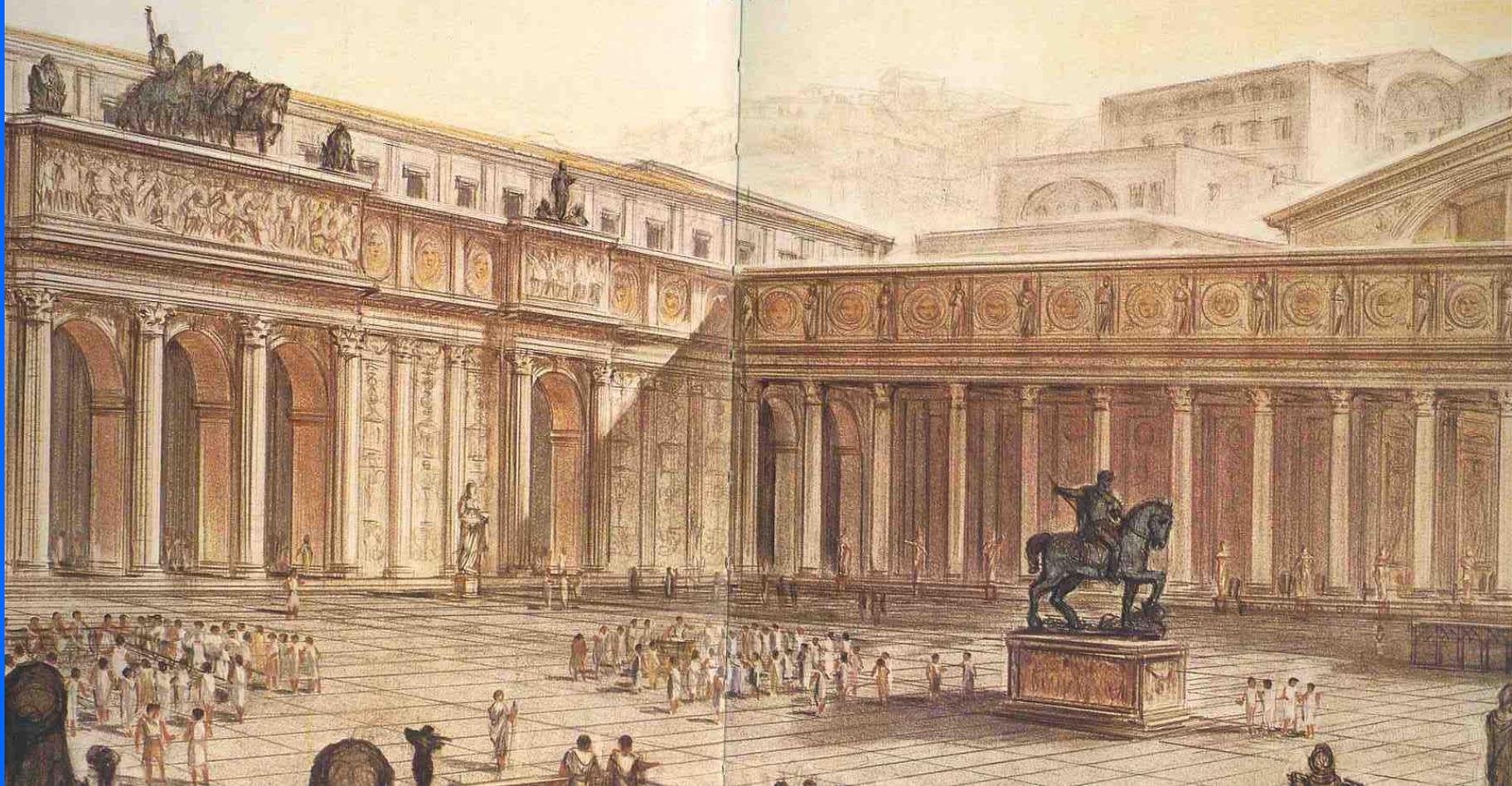


## Introduction: Warnings

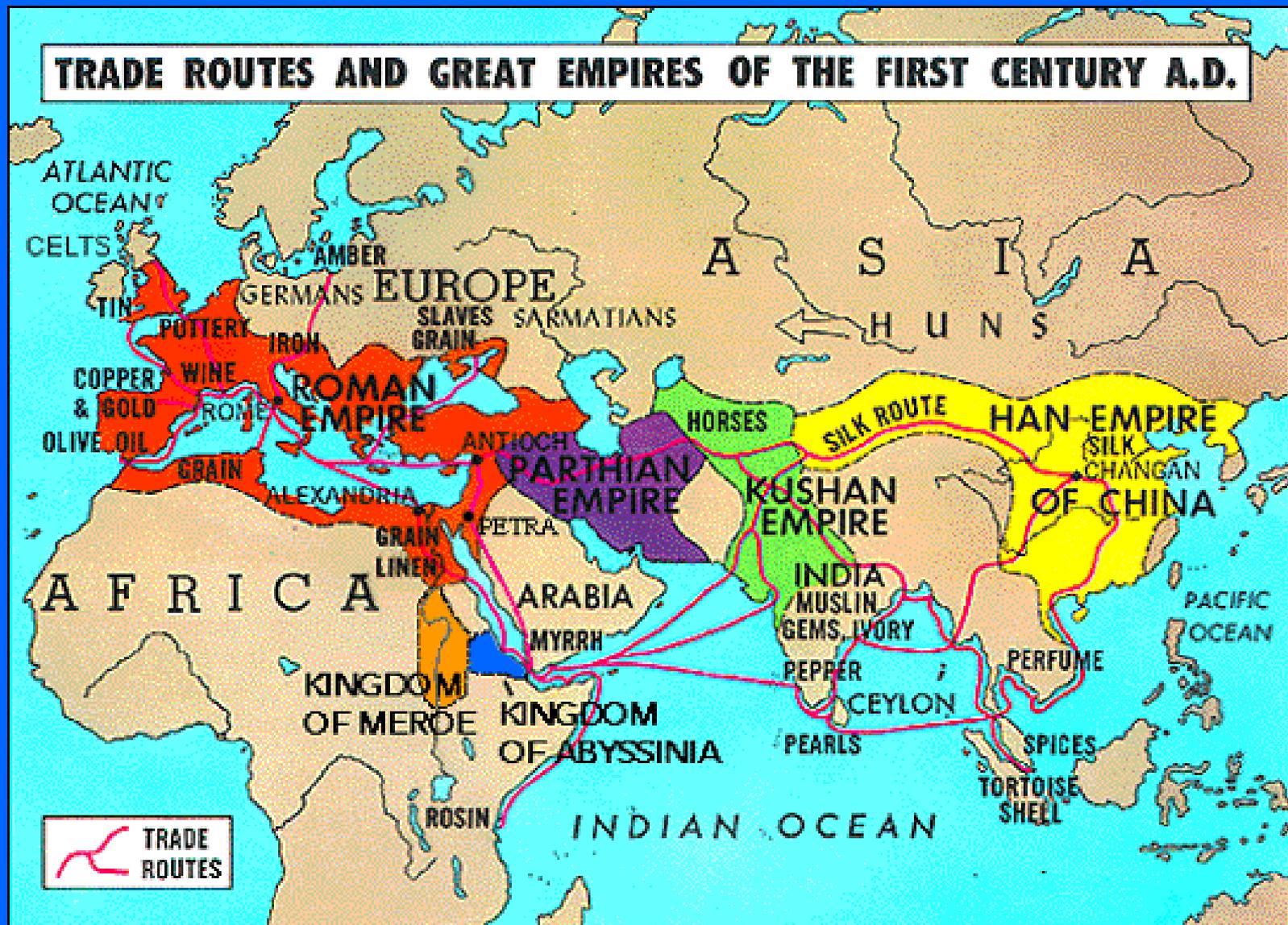
- We'll learn some treasured traditions are pagan in origin.
- We'll see the Church's blemishes and warts.
- I will sometimes say things to provoke and challenge you which I in fact do not believe myself, just to see if you are listening!
- We will discuss some controversial topics; let's do so in a spirit of charity and recognizing we may differ. Please.
- Chances are good that no matter who you are, at some point in this course you'll feel like your toes are being stepped on. Be open minded! Learn from this.

Was this World So Different than Our Own?

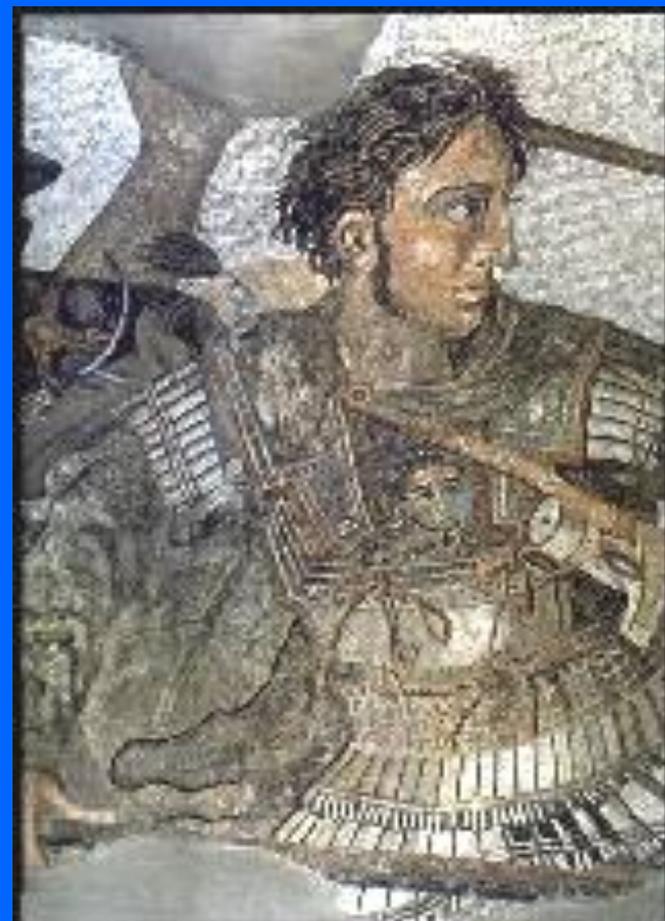
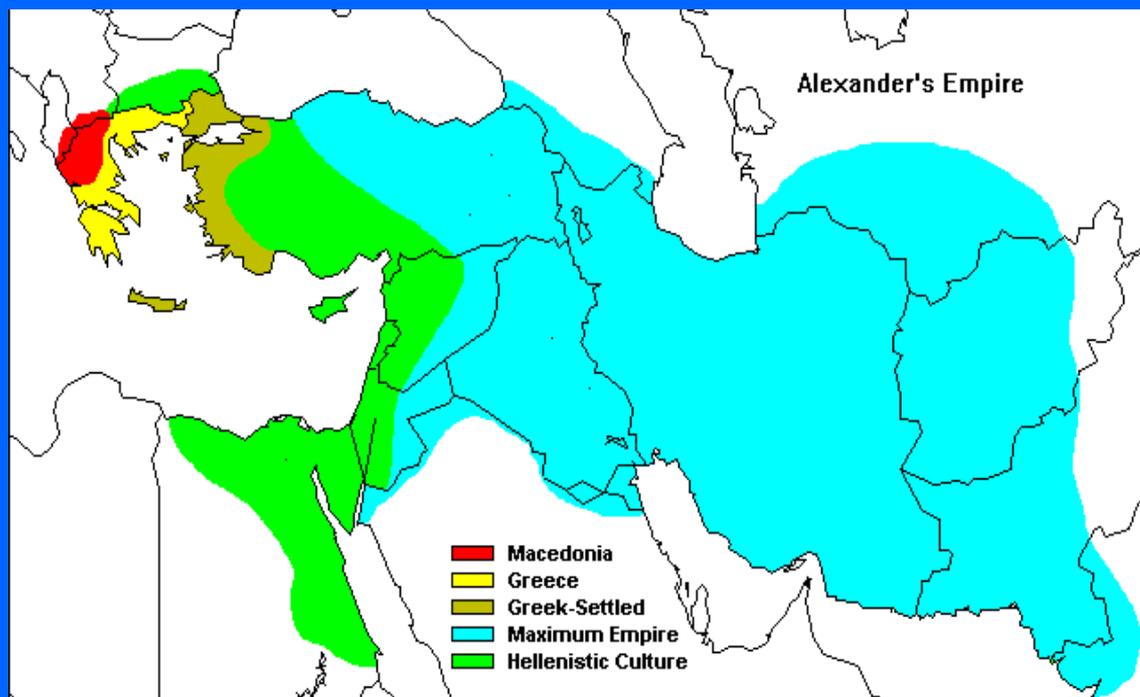
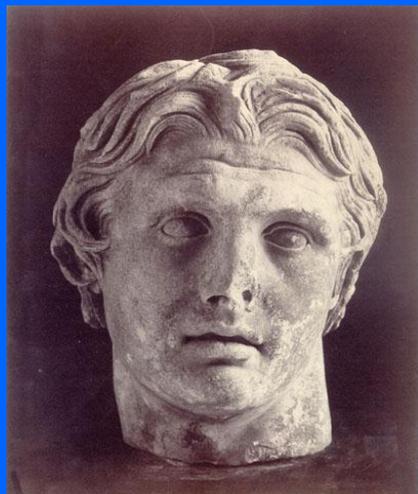
Let's Travel Back 2000 years in time and find out.



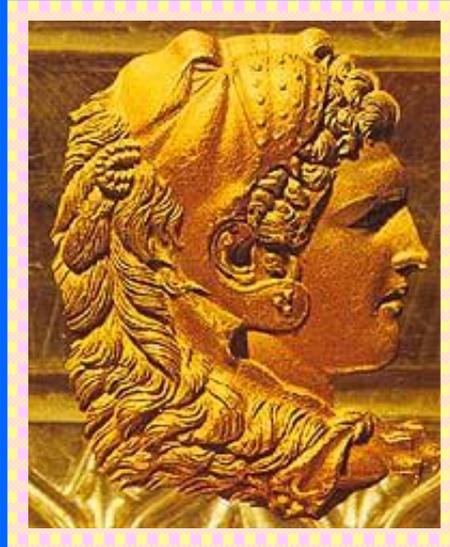
# The "World" as Romans Knew It

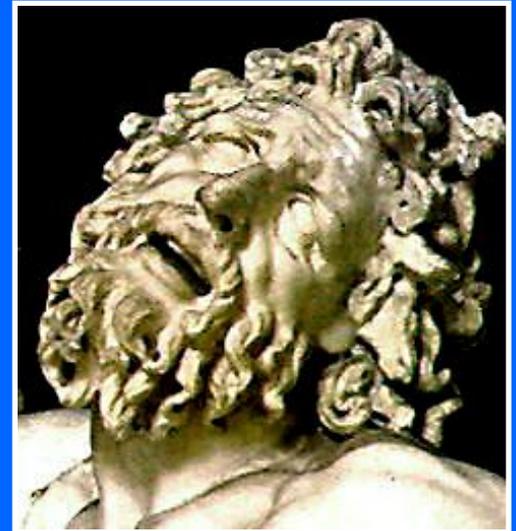
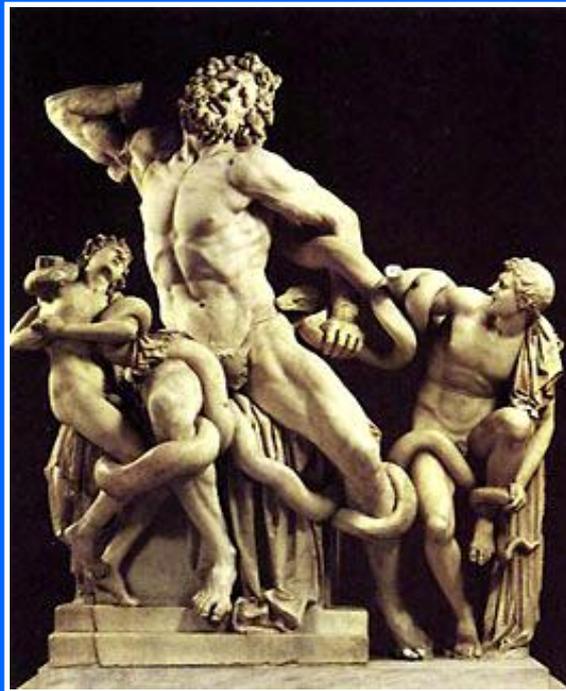
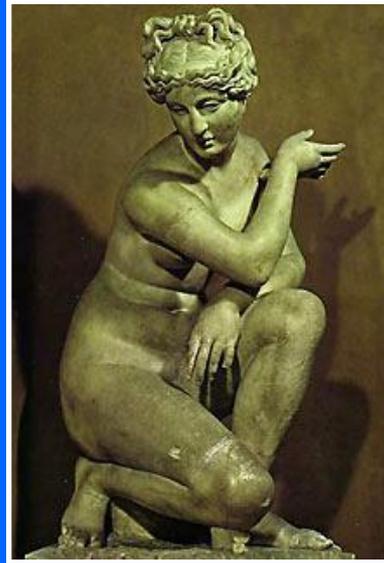
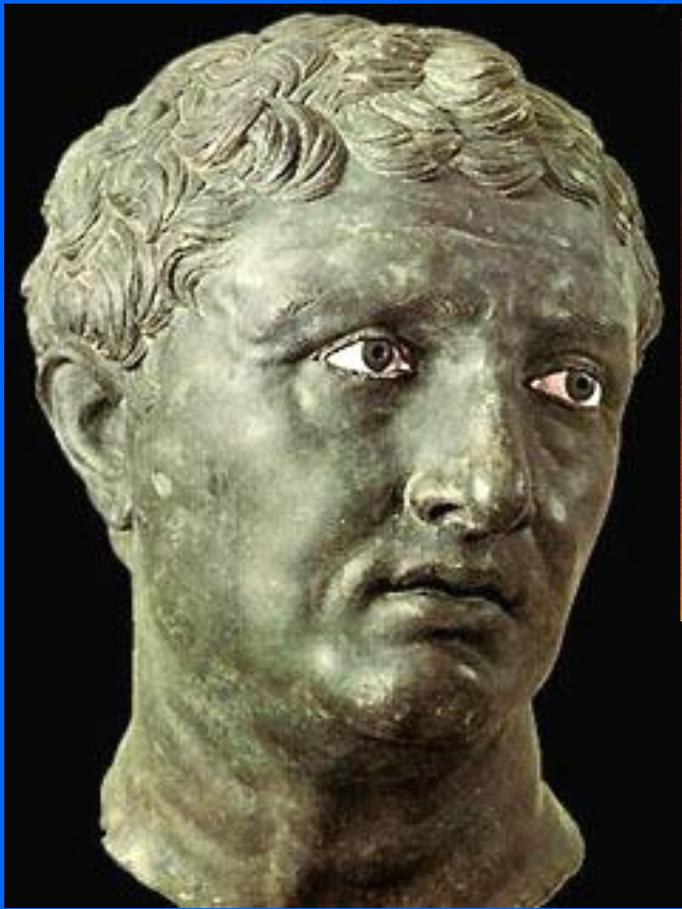


# Influence of Alexander the Great (356-323)



# Spread of Greek Culture





# Hellenistic Art

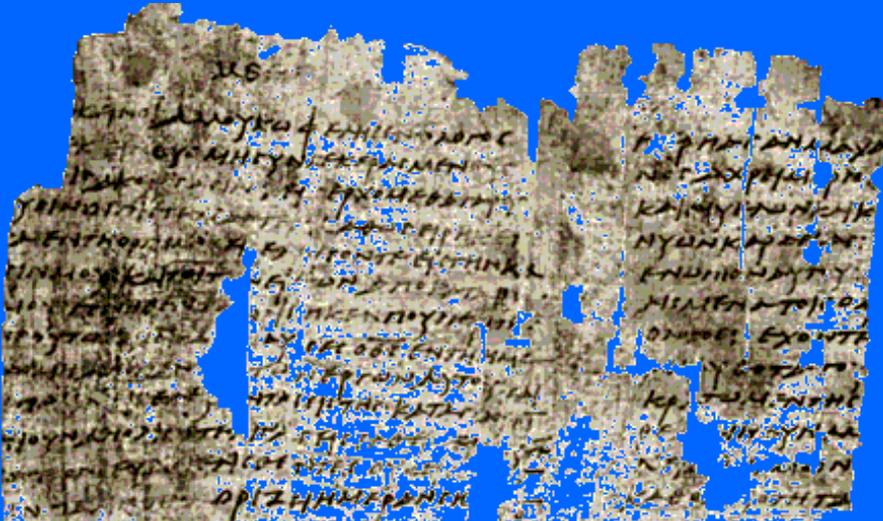
# Spread of Greek Philosophy

1. Epicureans
2. Stoics
3. Pythagoreans
4. Peripatetics
5. Platonists
6. Sceptics



# Spread of Greek Language

- Greek the common language from Syria to Sicily
- Widespread Literacy
- The Papyri



'Captive  
Greece  
took  
captive her  
savage  
conqueror  
and  
brought  
civilization  
to rustic

Latium'

As Roman military might and political administration moved east, Greek culture flowed west and came to prevail even in Rome.

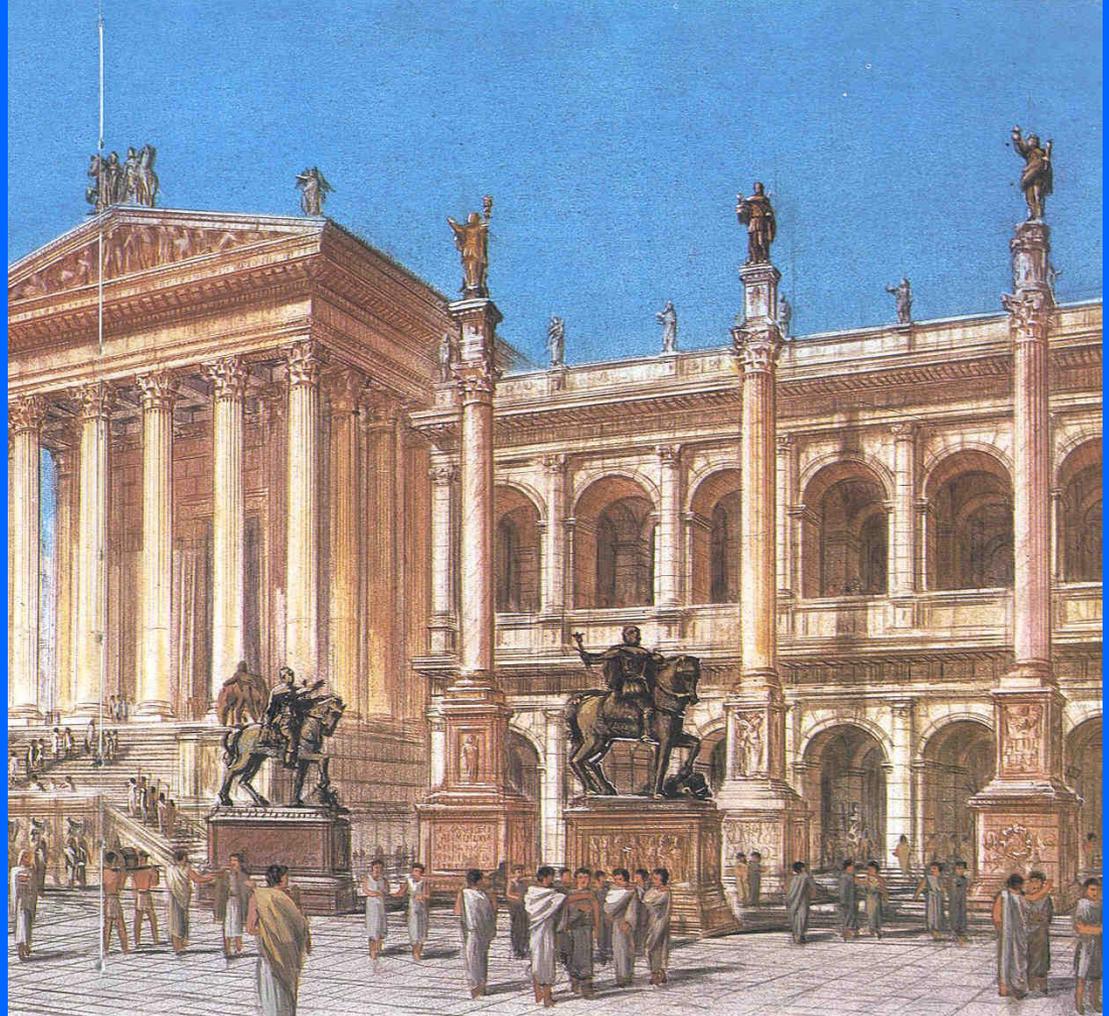
Horace: (*Ep.* 2.1.156).

# In 26 BC, an unprecedented 200 years of peace known as the *Pax Romana*

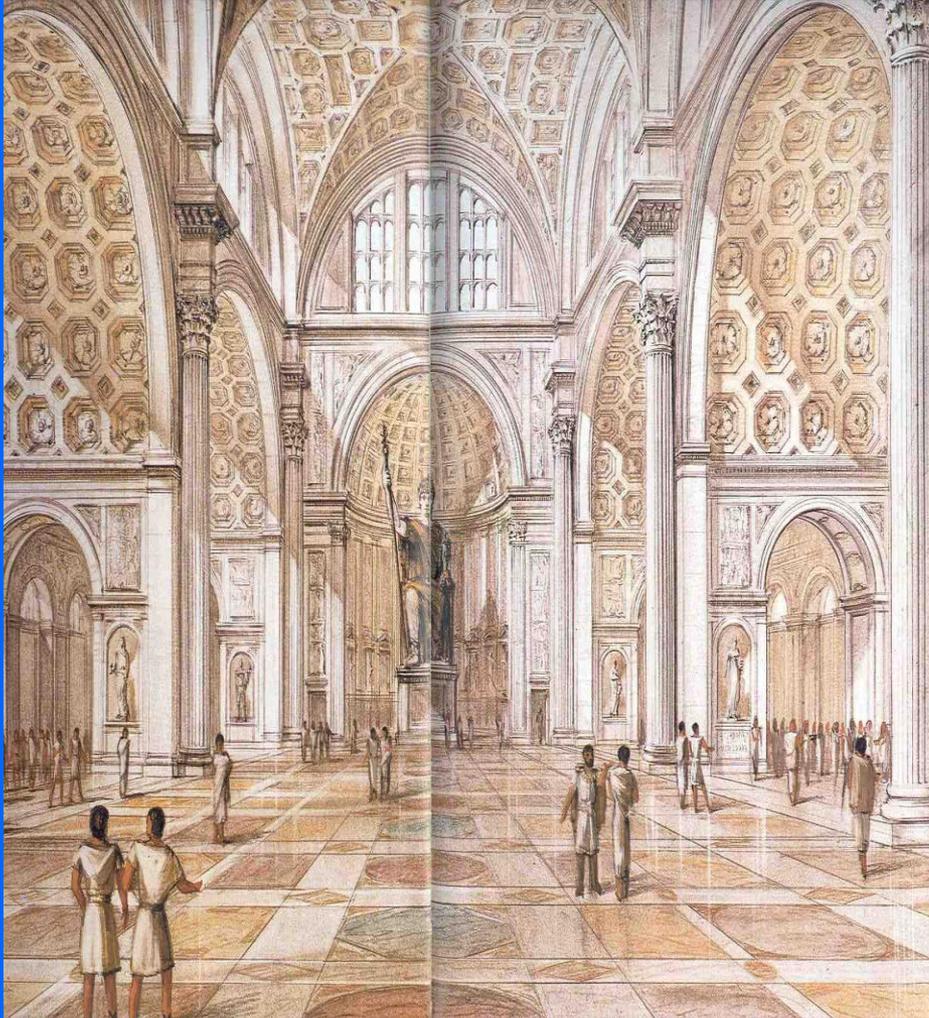
- 54 Plus Million People
- 1 million square miles
- Lasted 1000 years plus



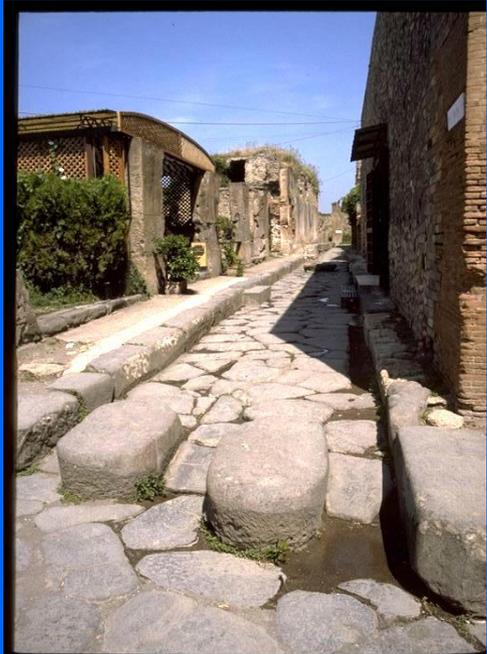
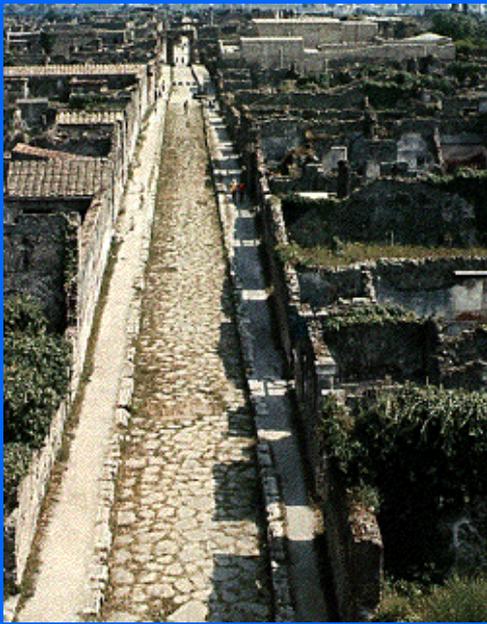
Augustus Caesar



# Roman Government & Law



# Roman Roads



# Roman Engineering



# What Was It Like To Be In a Roman City?



Clean, fresh drinking water, little crime, public restrooms,  
ample food and entertainment

# Roman Cities



Civilization levels not surpassed until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## THE CITY OF ROME

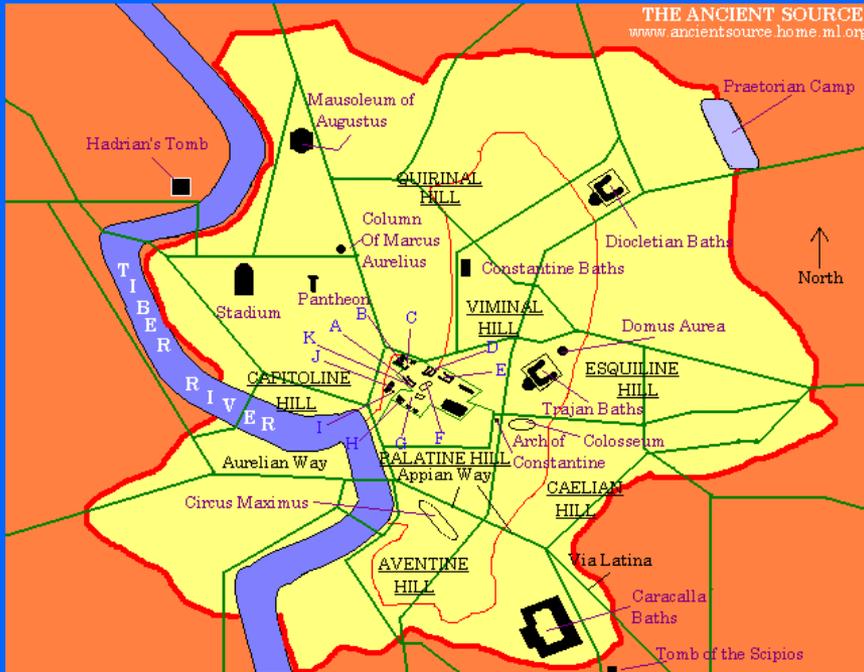
### NOT TO SCALE

Note: As a rough guide, the radius of the city (bounded by the Aurelian Wall) is about 4 kms or 2.2 miles

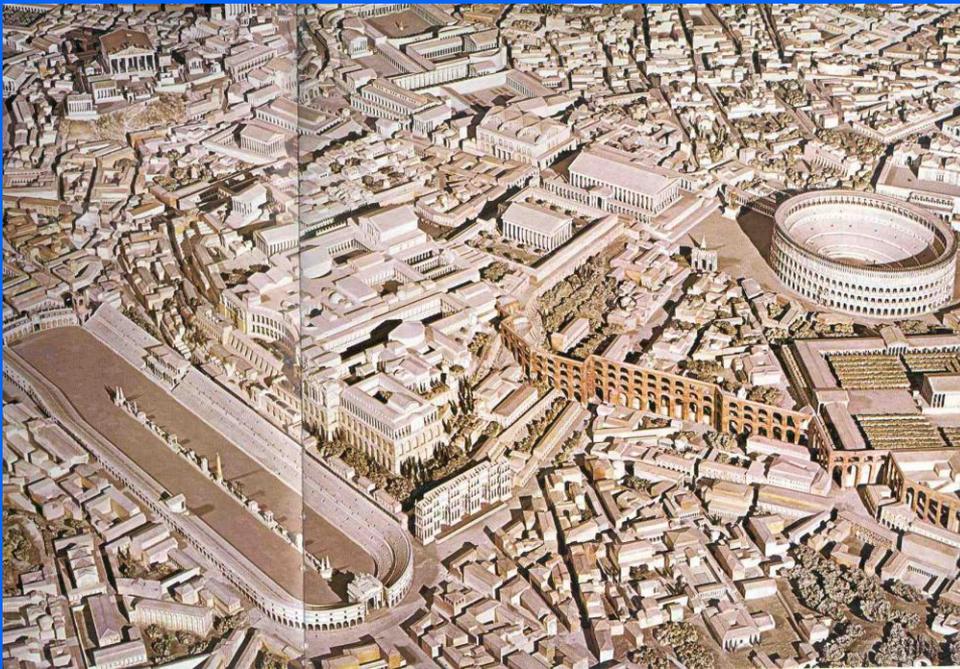
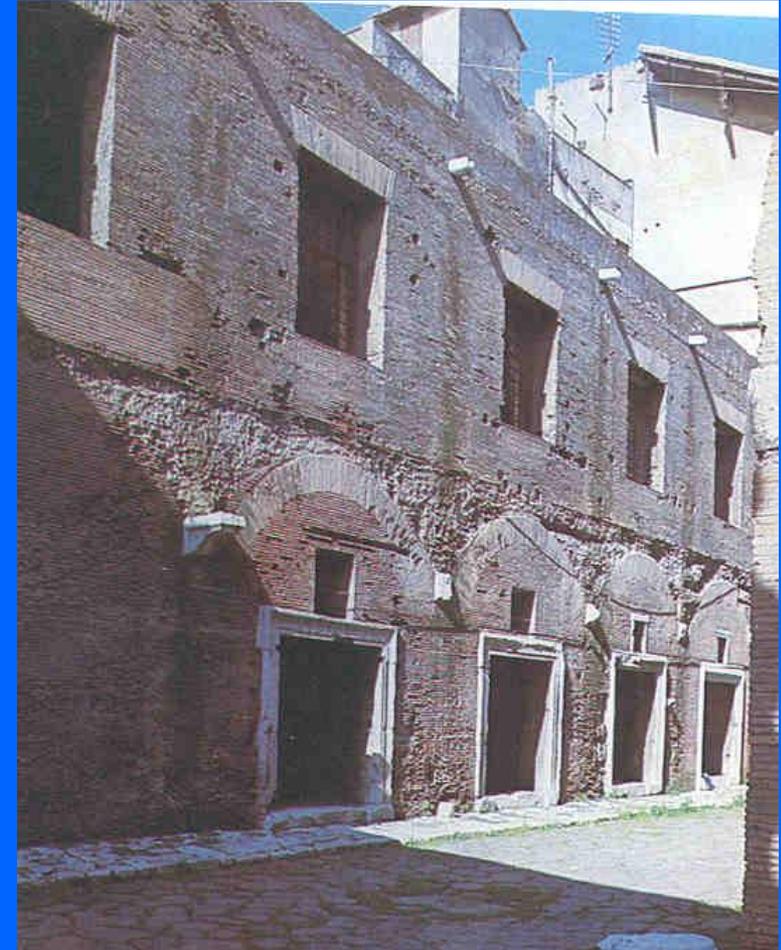
— ROAD  
— Servian Wall  
— Aurelian Wall

Structures of the Capitoline Hill

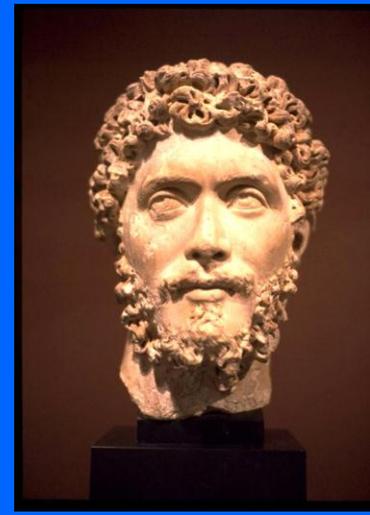
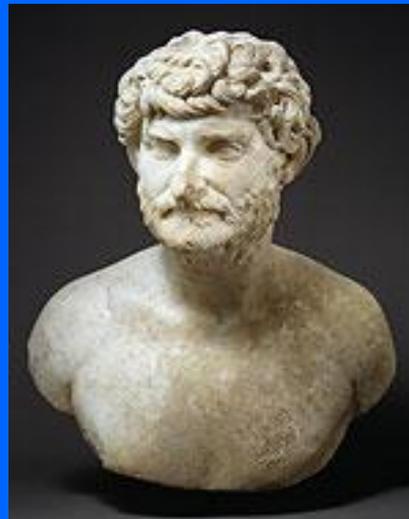
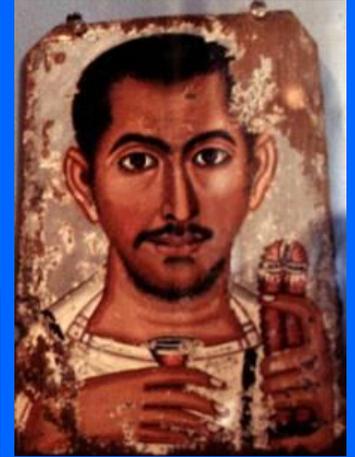
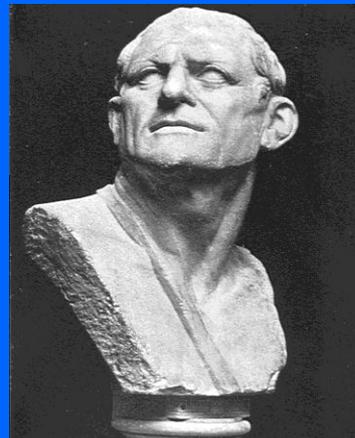
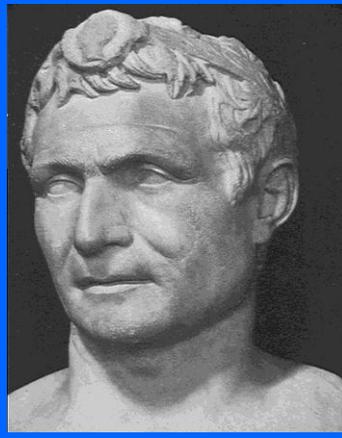
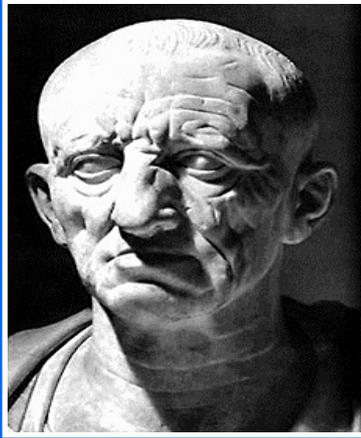
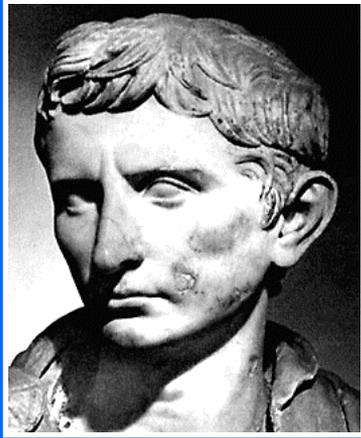
- A) Julian Forum
- B) Trajan Temple
- C) Trajan Forum
- D) Forum Augustus
- E) Sacred Way
- F) Forum of Nerva
- G) Roman Forum
- H) Basilica Julia
- I) Temple of Saturn
- J) Forum of Vespian
- K) Curia



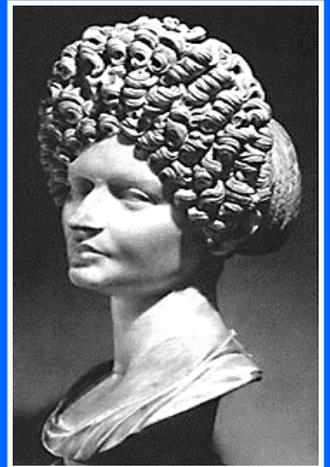
# Rome, City of 1 Million Plus



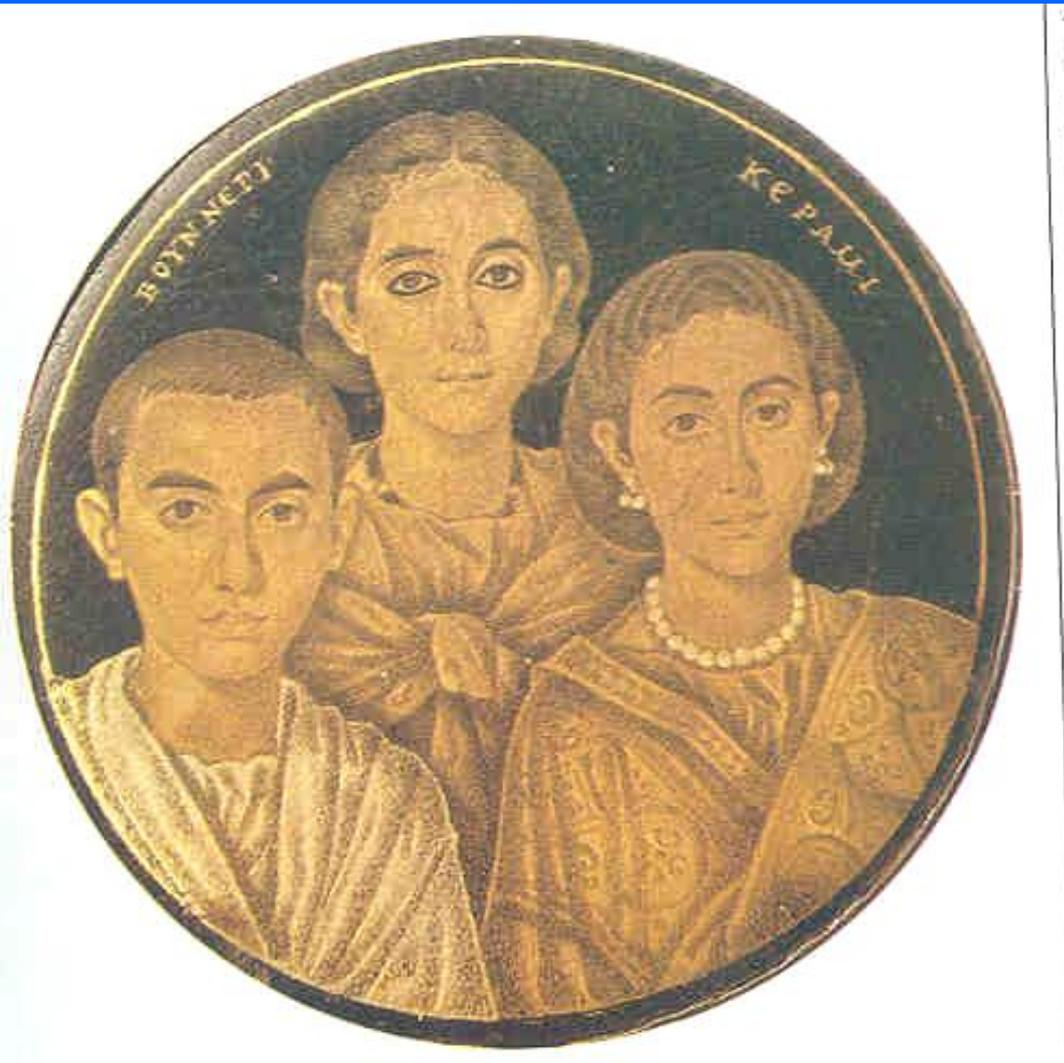
# What Were Roman Men Like?



# What Were Roman Women Like?

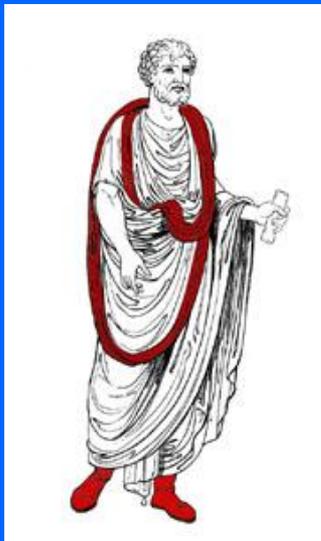


# What Were Roman Children Like?



Three elegant teenagers any parent could be proud of

# Roman Style

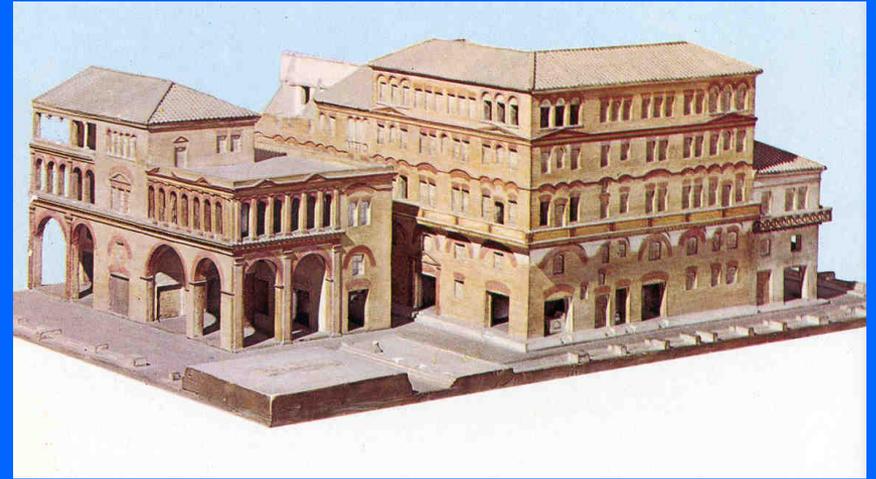




These women are sporting Pony tails.

Note fine table worthy of the Antique Road Show

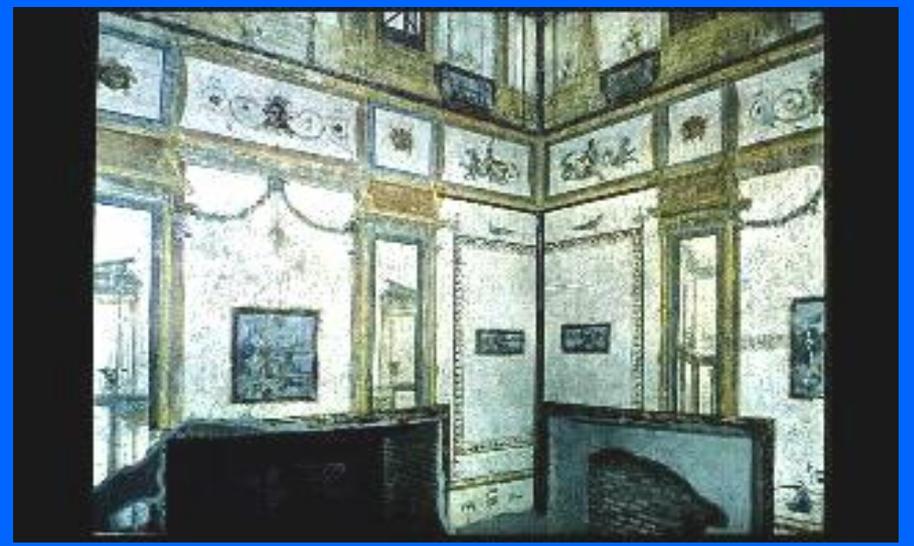
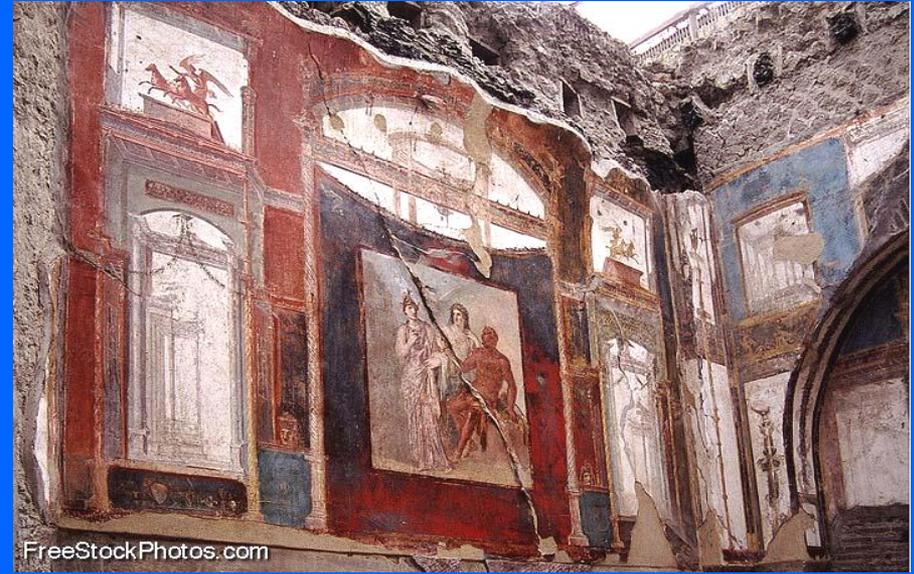
# What Were Their Homes Like?



Homes of middle class and some poor. Multi-story. No fireplaces or kitchens.



# Interiors of Wealthy Roman Homes



# Roman Art



Fresco



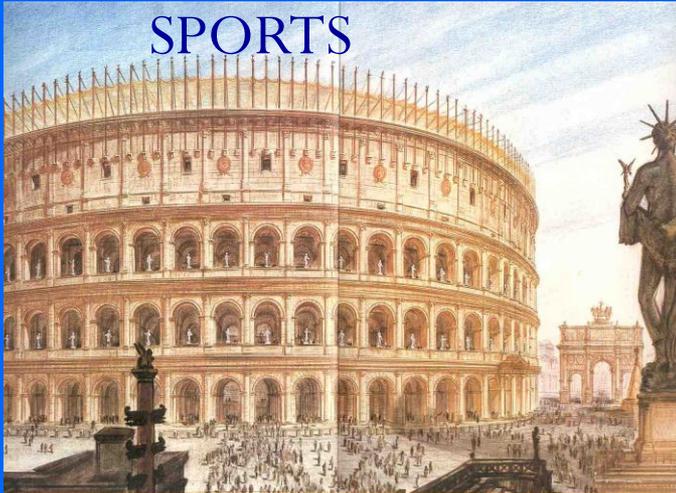
FreeStockPhotos.com

Mosaic



# What Did Romans Do In Their Free Time?

## SPORTS

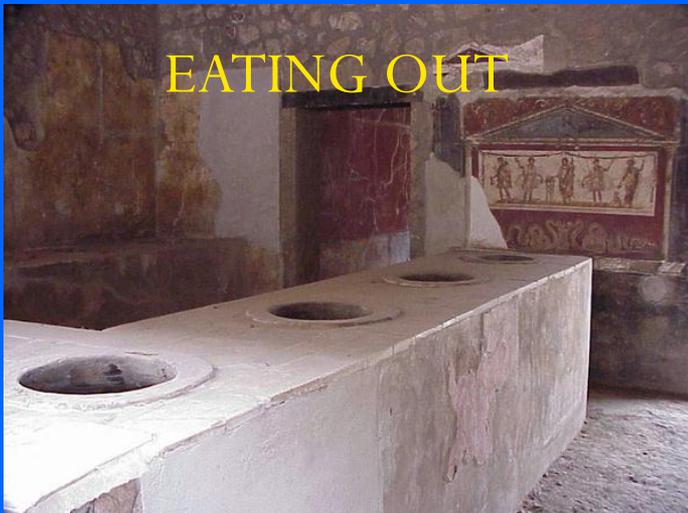


As for drink, there was a choice between wine with a flavor something like marsala and a resin wine such as one might drink in Greece today, both diluted with water.

Beer considered barbarian

Hard liquor unknown.

## EATING OUT



## A SHOW



# Education and Scholarship

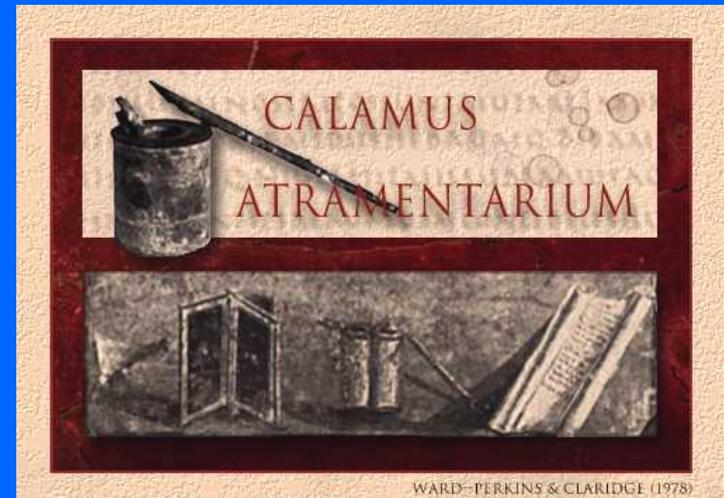
No Public  
Schools

Slave Tutors and  
Teachers

Emphasis on  
literature and  
rhetoric

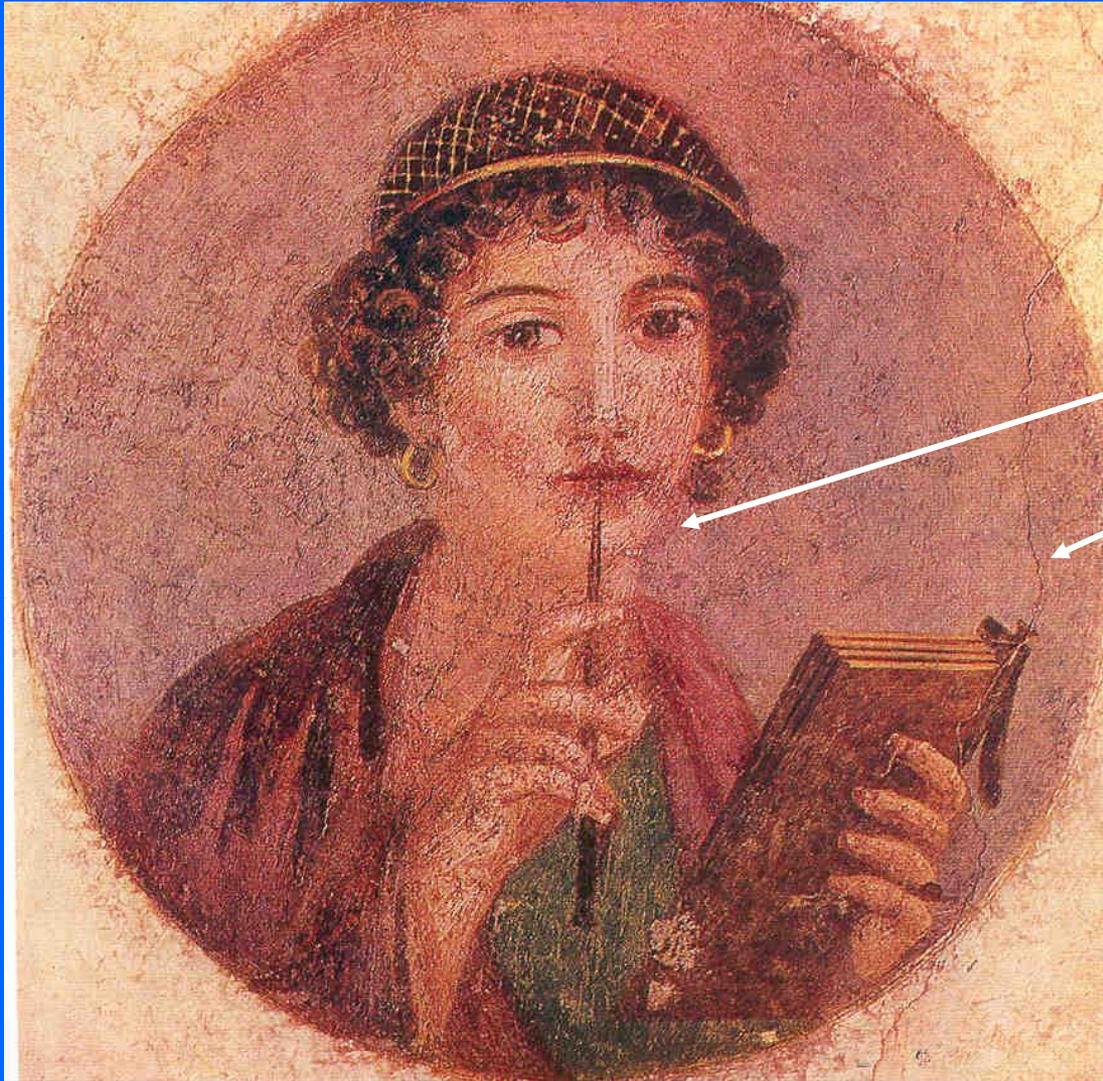


Many publicly accessible  
research libraries to promote  
research



WARD-PERKINS & CLARIDGE (1978)

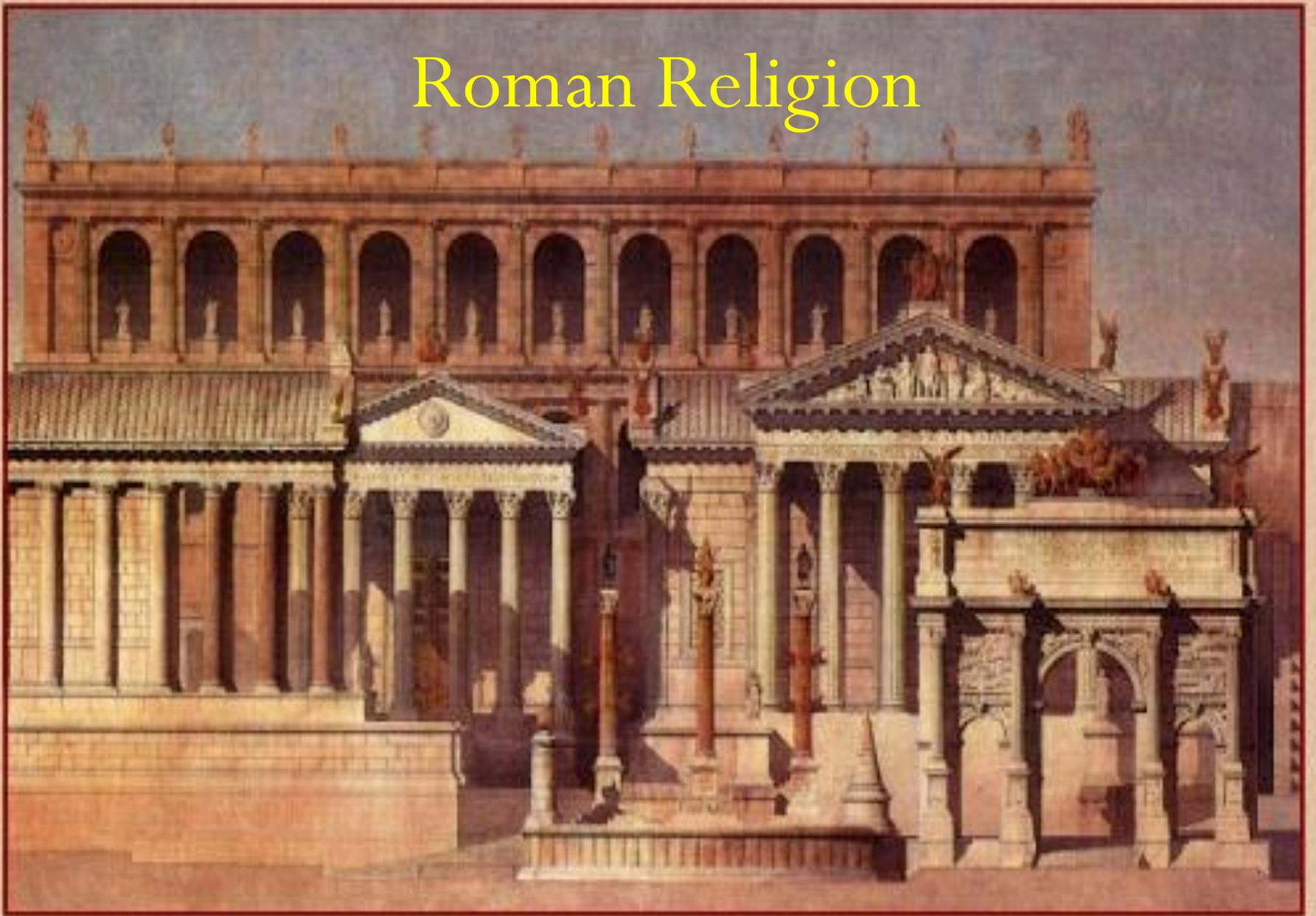
# How Were Women Treated?



Note wax  
book and  
stylus,  
signs this  
woman is  
educated  
and  
cultured

Romans were modern, even sophisticated people,  
who would look at home in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# Roman Religion



CONSTANT MOYAUX: TABULARIUM

# Roman Religion: A Contract

- No sacred writings
- Relationship is a contract dependent on sacrifice or a quest for knowledge
- gods had no ability to change the lives of followers
- gods did not provide guidance for daily living

Artemis of  
the  
Ephesians

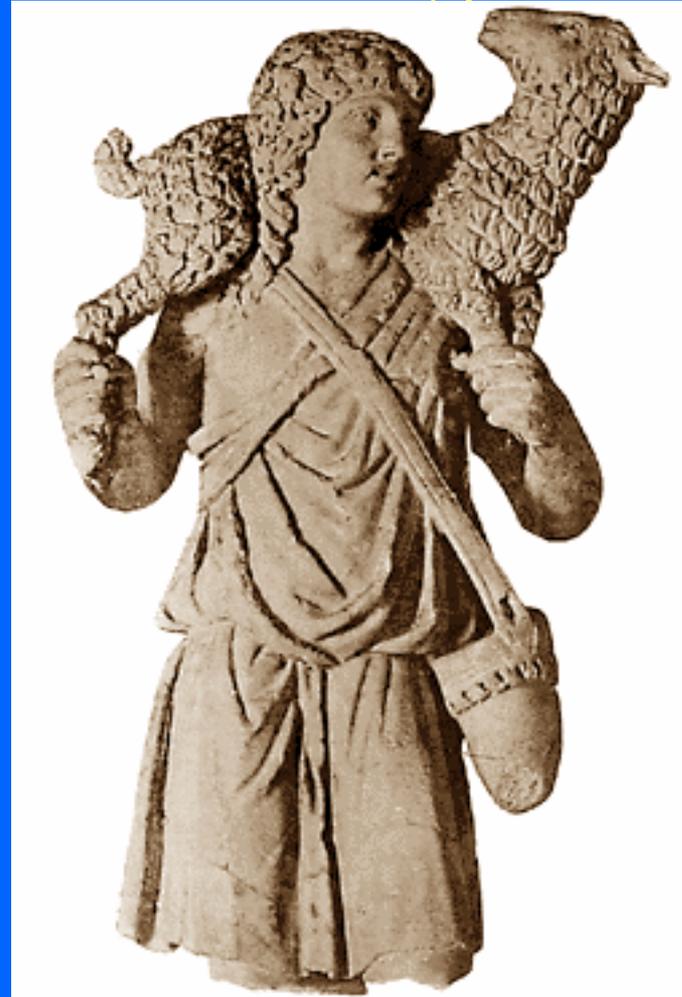


- Traditional Religion Dying Out, Skeptic Public
- Popular literature makes fun of beliefs in traditional deities

# Roman Gods:

## Personal, But Not Loving

- Have personalities
- Given human shapes (anthropomorphic)
- World is governed by humanlike beings
- Gods fight among themselves



Orpheus

# Pagan “Mother of God”, “Mother Earth” or “Mother Nature” Deity

Isis, was the Egyptian “Mother Goddess”, and was often portrayed as a loving mother, nursing her baby son Horus.

“Magna Mater” or “Great Mother” or “Mother of God” Was associated with Artemis or Cybelle. She was the mother of all living things, an earth mother, goddess of fertility and nature.

“Father Time” was the God “Kronos” or “Saturnus” and the god in whose honor the December “Saturnalia” feast was celebrated



“*Cultus*: The worship or veneration of a deity, and correct observance of religious obligations.

Roman religion was one of *cultus* (cult) rather than *pietas* (piety). ...For the Romans it was more important to observe the correct rituals: the gods were venerated by the strict observance of rituals to make them favorably disposed, irrespective of the ethics and morals of the worshippers.”

From: *A Dictionary of Roman Religion*

## Roman Religion: Rituals Not Relationship



Note: The one making the sacrifice has head covered, others have uncovered heads

# Roman Religious Rituals

Religious *processions* were common, including the carrying of standards, scepters and maces and ceremonial vessels

Shallow bowls of “*holy water*” used in ritualistic washings or for pouring of libations.

*Priests covered their heads* while praying or sacrificing, to guard against sights and sounds of ill omens

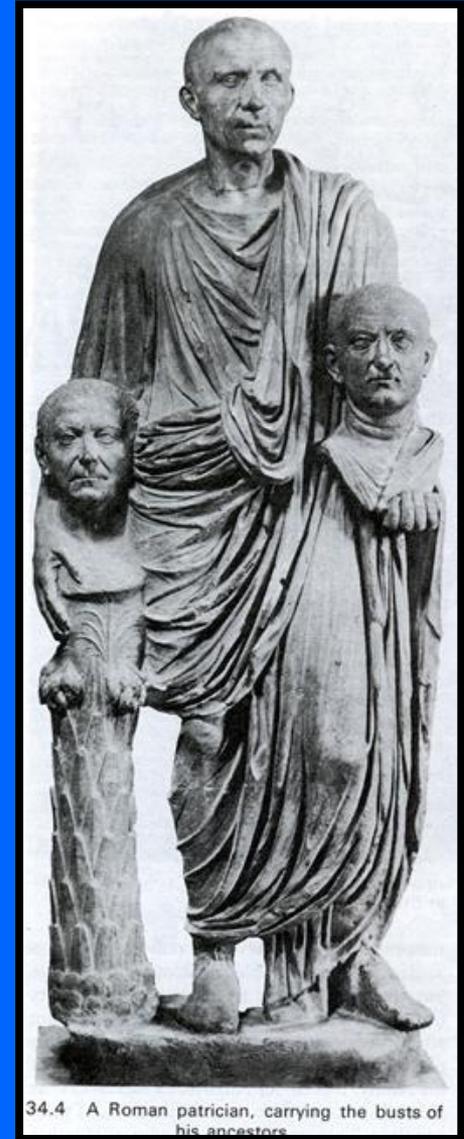
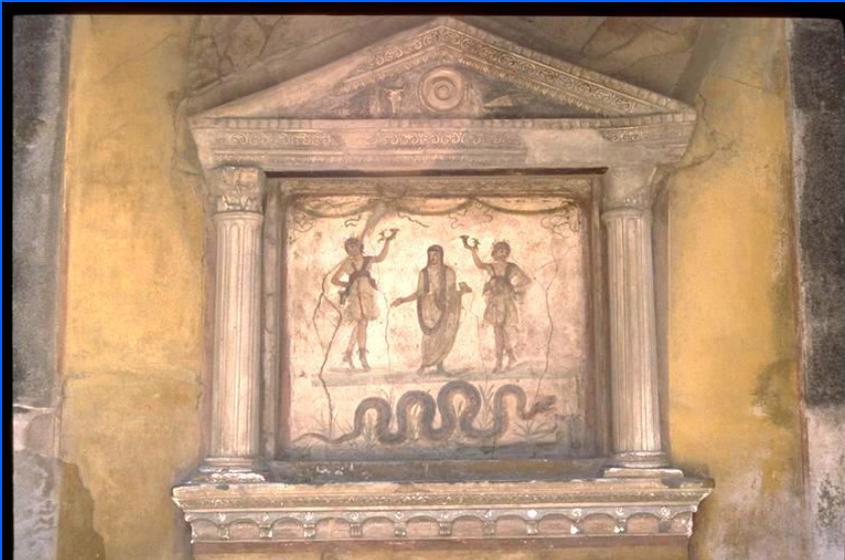
*Votive candles and offerings* presented by worshippers at entrance to temples to accompany vows and prayers.

*Fingers in Benediction symbol* from Jupiter Sabazius and Magna Mater rituals.

*Elaborate ceremonies* performed by highly trained priests, dressed in *white linen garments*, accompanied by music

# Ancestor Worship & Patron Deities

- *lares* (ghosts of the dead ancestors)
- *penates* (guardians of the hearth).
- *numina* spirits of the dead



34.4 A Roman patrician, carrying the busts of his ancestors

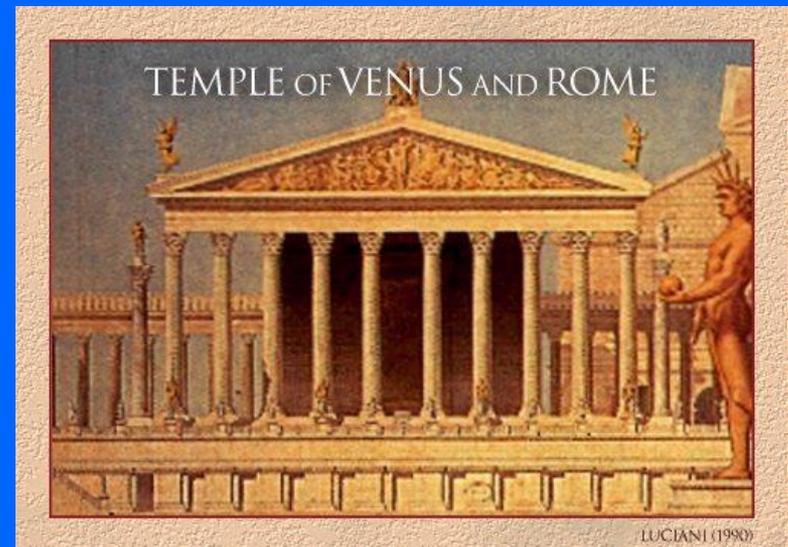
**A Roman patrician, carrying the busts of his ancestors**

# Roman Priests: A Class Set Apart

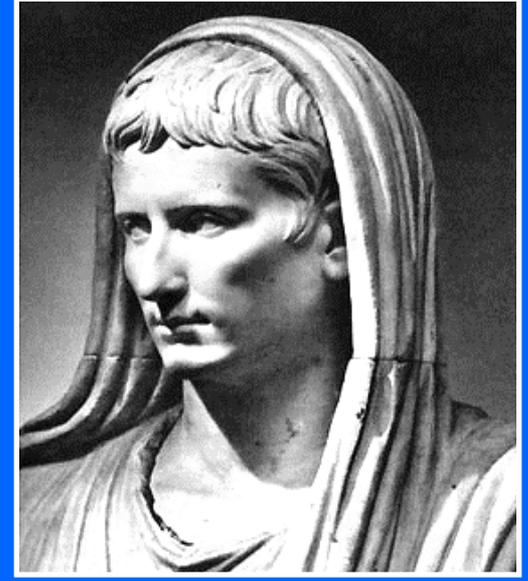
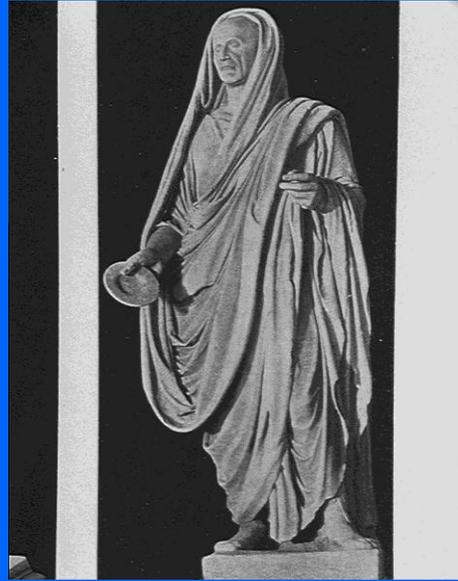
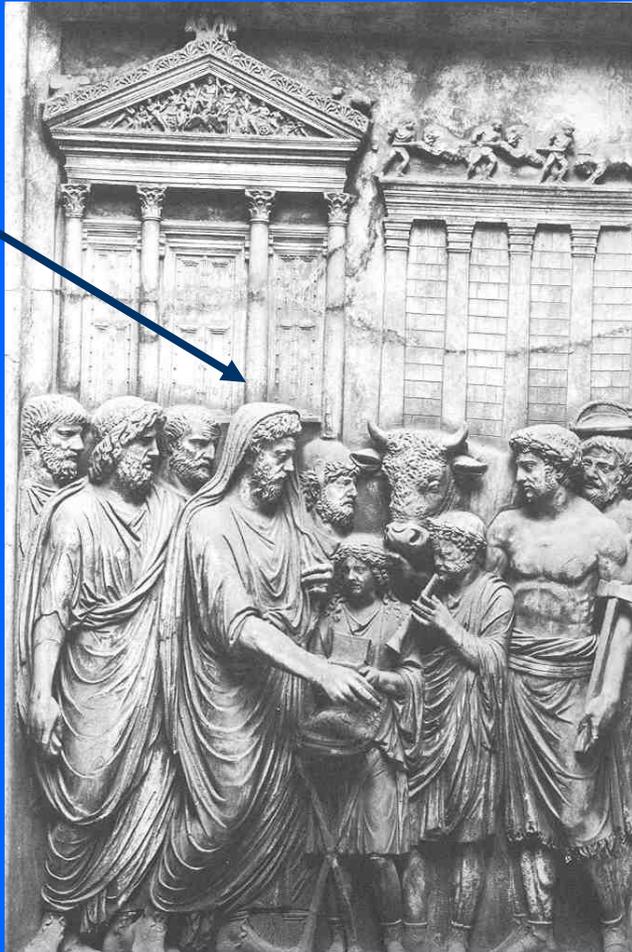
- Not moral leaders, not concerned with welfare of an congregation
- Organized by a hierarchy of leadership, with Pontifex Maximus at top
- Wore “Regalia”
- Professionals



The Bishop's Miter was first worn by pagan priests



# The “Head” of the Roman “Church”: The Emperor (*Pontifex Maximus*/Supreme Pontiff)



Augustus Caesar  
with veil while  
making a sacrifice

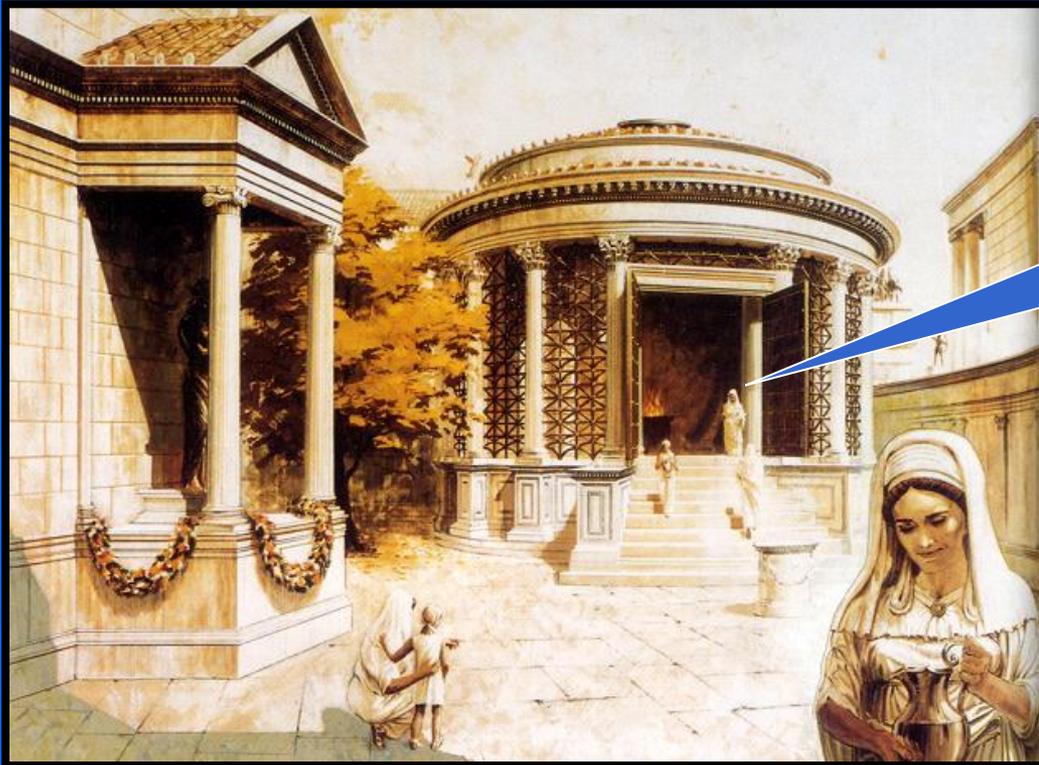
Marcus Aurelius Making Sacrifice to Jupiter  
(also veiled)

# Vestal Virgins

Celibacy and Purity Required

Lived in “Convents”

Considered “married” to gods, were put to death if they lost their chastity



How do we solve a problem like Maria?

Precursors to Nuns?



# Death and Funeral Practices

- the Romans cremated their dead until burial became the custom in the early 2nd century A.D.
- But Jews and Greeks buried their dead



Sarcophogus



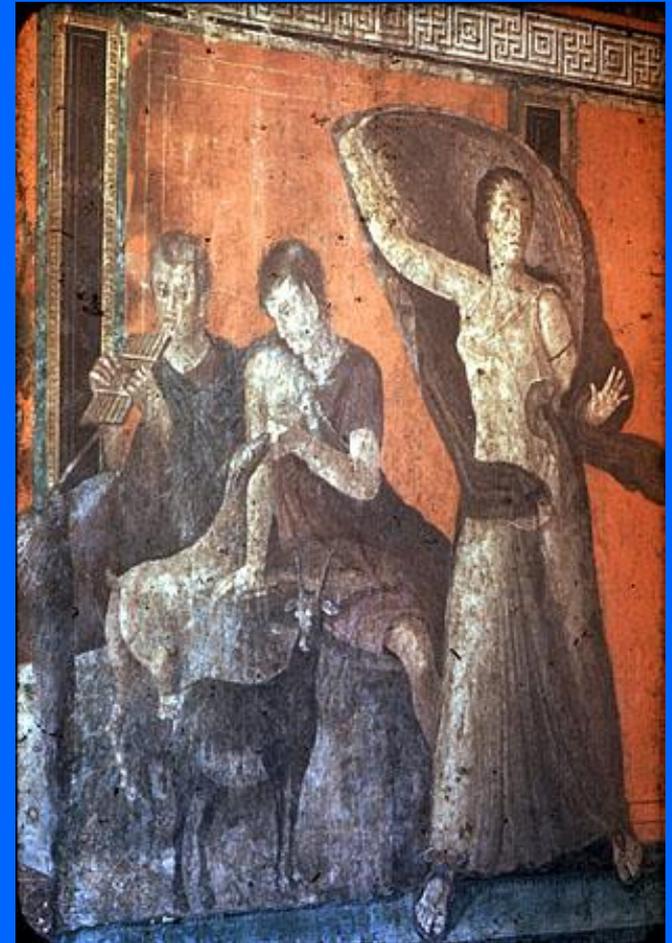
Incense & candles  
(offered in temples  
for dead loved ones)



Roman Funeral Processions

# Roman Belief in Heaven & Hell

- The poet Virgil described the world of the dead as divided into a limbo, a hell and a heaven (Elysium).
- Elysium (or Elysian Fields) was vague and it was thought to be in the sky or beyond the ocean.
- Ideas from Greek myths (such as paying Charon to cross the river Styx to reach the god Hades) were possibly believed by the Romans, as coins were placed in the dead body's mouth.



# Traditional Notions of Hell

- “There is a road that slopes downhill, all gloomy with funereal yew. It leads to the underworld, through regions mute and silent. There the sluggish Styx breathes forth its mists, and by that path descend the ghosts of those newly dead, the shades of mortals duly laid to rest in their tombs. Far and wide the desolate spot is wrapped in gloomy chill. The ghosts, just lately arrived, do not know where the road lies which leads to the Stygian city, nor whether to go to find the grim palace of dusky Dis. His populous city has a thousand approaches, and gates on every side, all standing open. As the sea absorbs rivers from all over the earth, so that place receives every soul: it is never too small, however great the throng. New crowds arriving make no difference. Lifeless shadows without blood or bones wander about, some jostling in the market-place, some round the palace of the underworld's king, while others busy themselves with the trades which they practiced in the old days, when they were alive. Others are subjected to punishment, each according to his crime.”
- Plutarch, *Moralia* (Divine Vengeance)

# More “Modern” Belief: “dust to dust”

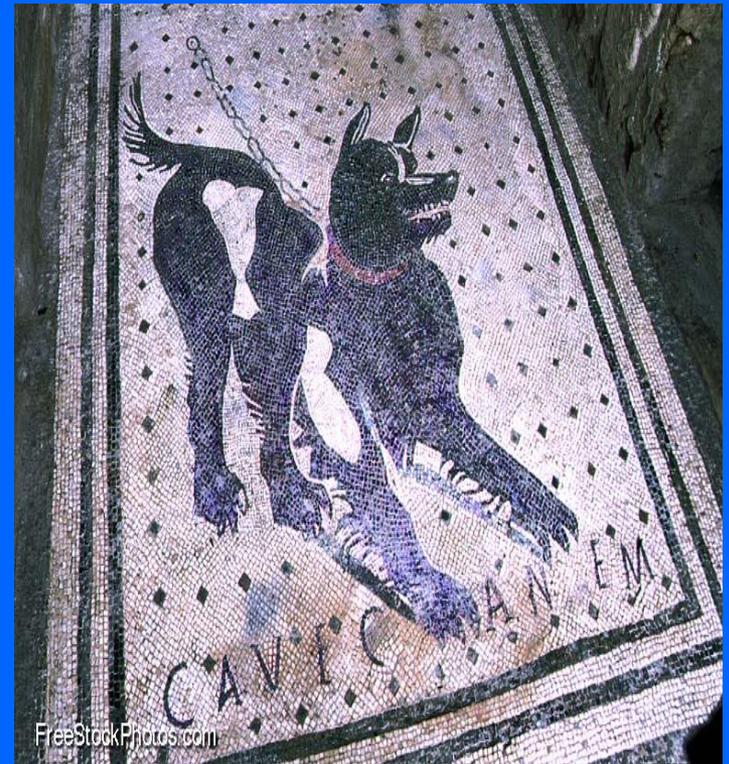


“Wayfarer, do not pass by my epitaph, but stand and listen, and then, when you have learned the truth, proceed. There is no boat in Hades, no ferryman Charon, no Aeacus keeper of the keys, nor any dog called Cerberus. All of us who have died and gone below are bones and ashes: there is nothing else. What I have told you is true. Now withdraw, wayfarer, so that you will not think that, even though dead, I talk too much.”

*Epitaph from a Tomb*

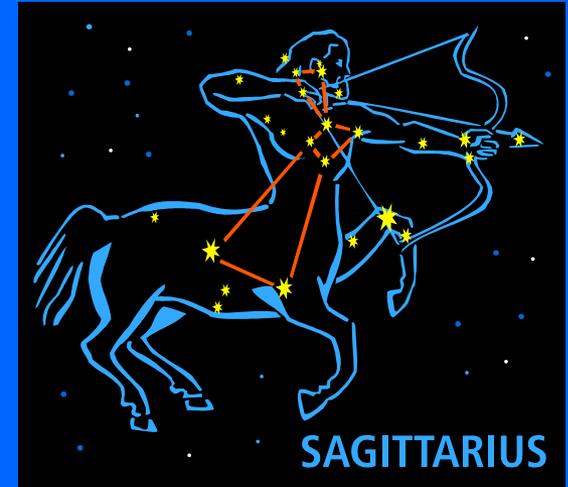
# Scoffers, Cynics, Agnostics and Athiests

- “Reflect that there are no ills to be suffered after death, that the reports that make the Lower World terrible to us are mere tales, that no darkness is in store for the dead, no prison, no blazing streams of fire, no river of Lethe, that no judgment-seats are there, nor culprits, nor in that freedom so unfettered are there a second time any tyrants. All these things are the fancies of the poets, who have harrowed us with groundless terrors. Death is a release from all our suffering, a boundary beyond which our ills cannot pass - it restores us to that peaceful state in which we lay before we were born.”
- Seneca



# Magic and the Occult

- Bad Luck / Evil Omens
- Seers, Diviners & Fortune Telling
- Astrology
- Curses
- Black Magic
- “Gesundheit”
- Black Cats
- Unlucky Numbers
- Ghosts and “Shades” inhabited places where dead did not receive proper burials



# Mystery Religions



Fresco at Pompeii showing Dionysian ritual

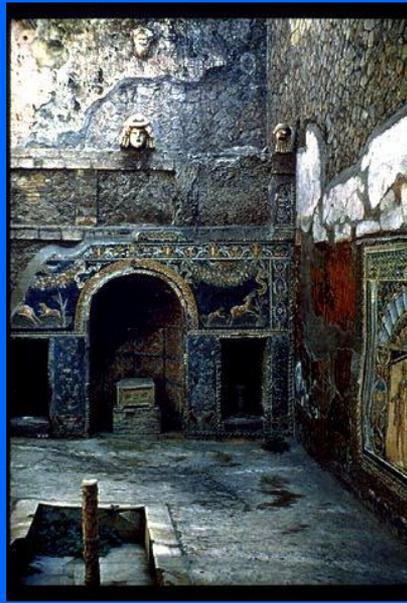
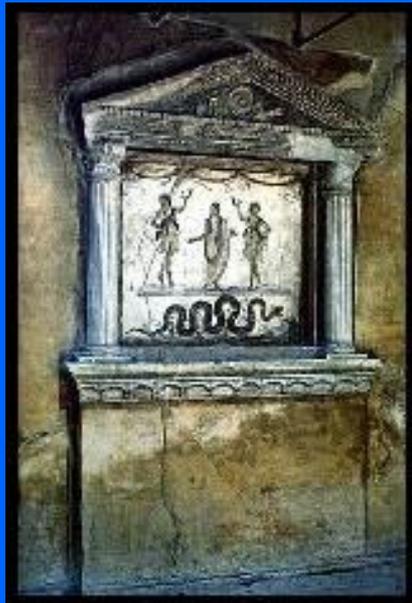
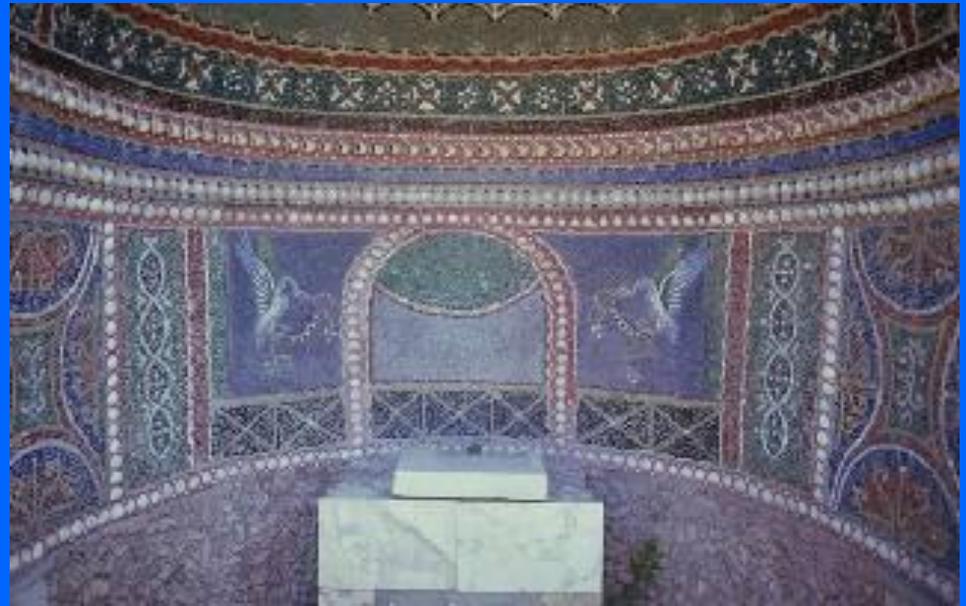
- Very Popular
- Secret Meetings
- Common Meals
- Ecstatic Frenzies
- Sexual Activities
- Immortality
- Initiation Ceremonies



- Greek Eleusian and Dionysian Mysteries
- The Egyptian Cults of Serapis and Isis
- Persian Mithras

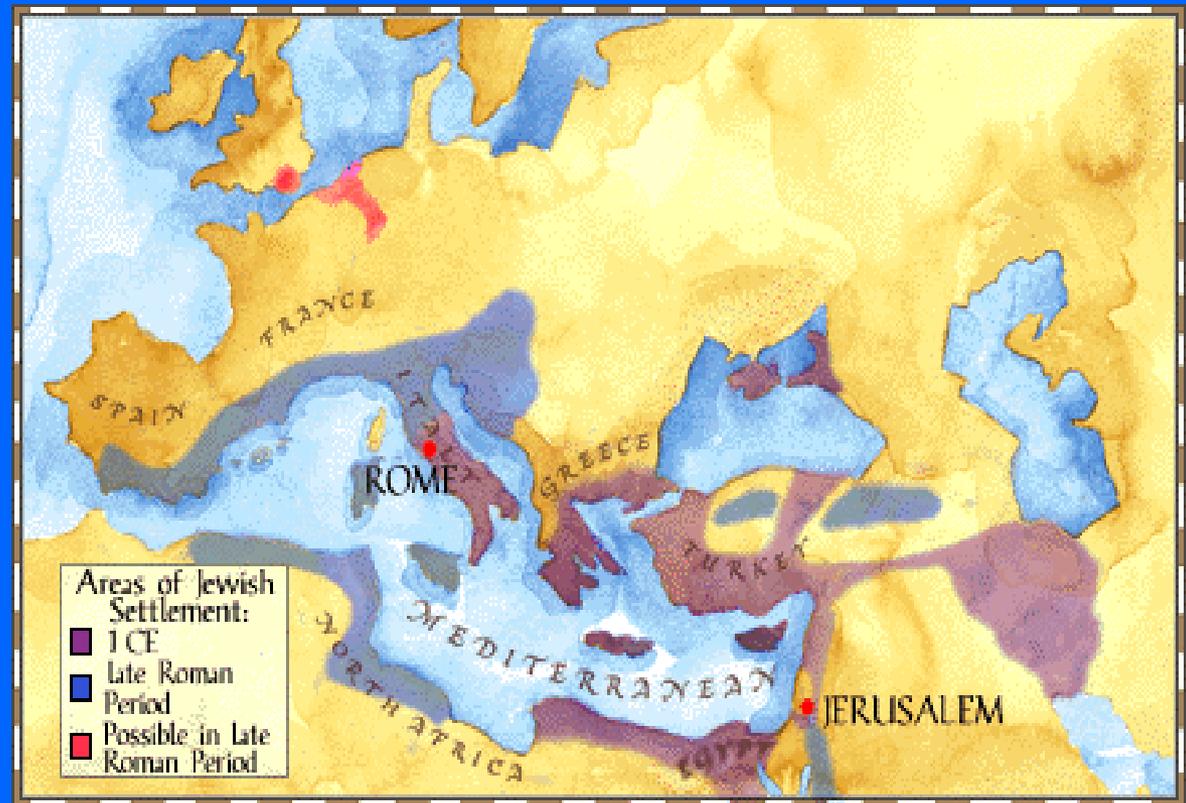


# Roman Religion: Altars and Holy Sites



# Spread of Judaism

- Jews given protected and special treatment by Julius Caesar, Augustus Caesar and Emperor Claudius
- Loss of knowledge of Hebrew outside a few Rabbis
- Circumcision, food laws, etc separated Jew from Gentile
- Separate Jewish Courts established outside jurisdiction of Roman Courts



# Diaspora Jews were Evangelistic

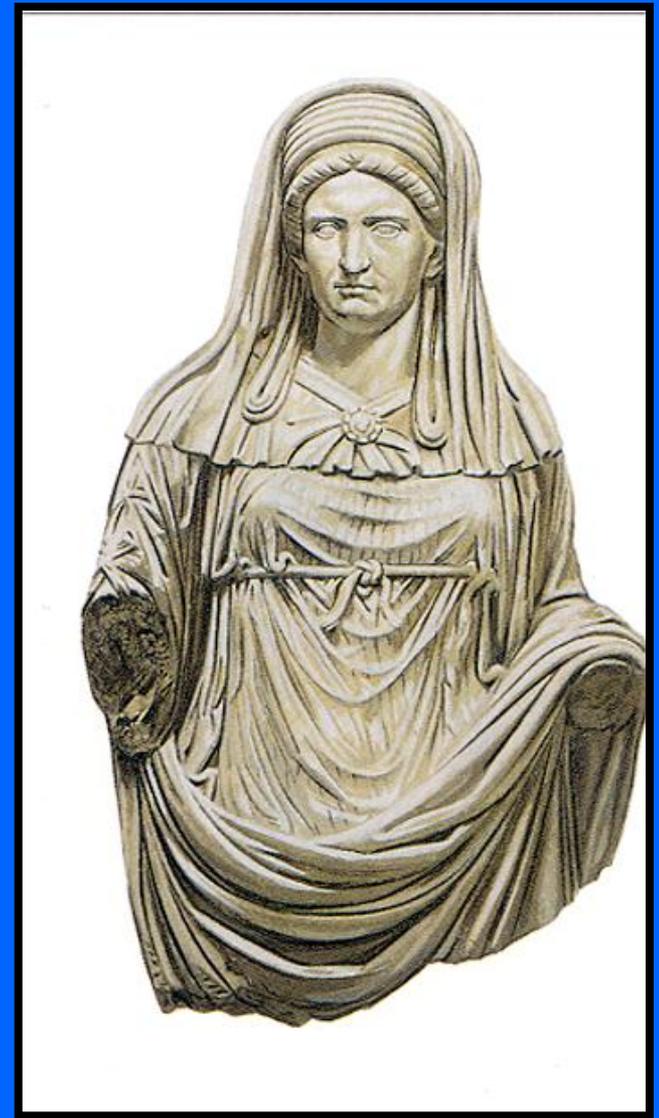
- 139 BC, Roman edict requiring Jews to “return to their homes” and stop spreading the worship of “Jupiter Sabazius.”
- Cicero referred to Jewish mobs spreading “barbarous superstitions.”
- Play-writer Horace joked that Jews *forced* people to join them.
- Widespread Roman literary references to the Jewish “sabbath” -- even Augustus claimed to have observed it on occasion!
- Under Domitian, decrees issued to check Jewish proselytizing activities.
- Under Hadrian, decrees forbidding circumcisions of converts to Judaism.
- Significant percentages in Roman synagogues appear to have been Latins, not Jews in terms of ethnic background.



Candelabra, NOT  
STAR OF DAVID, was  
the universal Jewish  
symbol

# Roman Weddings

- The date was chosen after consulting the oracles, but June was most popular time
- Bride wore a white gown, and her hair was done up with flowers and she wore a veil over her face.
- Bride was led with the groom toward an altar where a sacrifice was made and candles lit.
- The couple joined hands and signed marriage contracts.
- After the ceremony, there was a feast or banquet with all the guests
- After the banquet there was a wedding procession.
- Upon arrival at the new home of the couple, the groom carried the bride over the threshold.



This is a bridal gown she's wearing

# Contemporary Issues: Breakdown of Marriage & Family

- Roman marriage was a private act, which did not require the sanction of any public authority.
- Marriage to just one person at a time; no polygamy.
- Concubines were common, however.
- Sex slaves were nearly universal. Many were young boys and girls.
- Adultery with another man's wife was a crime.
- Emp. Augustus' morality laws



# Contemporary Issues: Inequality of Sexes

- Women were not bought and sold like chattel or left to other men in their wills!!
- Women did not have equal rights but could own property, inherit, sue in court, seek a divorce and even be lawyers!
- Divorce, from a legal standpoint, was as easy for the wife as for the husband and as informal as marriage.



- Slavery was incredibly widespread and massive. At the peak of the Imperial period, estimates are that 1 in 3 residents of the Roman Empire was a slave and that in parts of Italy the slaves outnumbered the free.
- Slavery was very different from the Old South in the US. It was not race or ethnic based and in many cases the slaves were more highly educated than their owners. Many wealthy Romans owned slaves as tutors, personal physicians and translators.
- Freedmen were former slaves that had been “redeemed” by purchase of their freedom.
- Many times in the Jewish community other Jews purchased Jewish slaves to free them but most freedmen were freed by their masters upon the master’s death or by the purchase of their own freedom.

## Contemporary Issues: Slavery



Slave from Gaul

# Contemporary Issues: Divorce

- Divorce was easy and very common.
- Many Roman men and women were married and divorced over and over again, scores of times.



# Contemporary Issues

## : Abortion & Infanticide

- Abortion was widespread and accepted in normal society. A number of “home remedies” were employed.
- The practice of exposing unwanted babies was common. Most of the exposed were snatched up by slave traders but many were left to die.
  - “A citizen of Rome did not “have” a child, he “took” a child, “raised” him up. Immediately after the birth it was the father’s prerogative to raise the child from the earth where the midwife had placed it, thus indicating that he recognized the infant as his own and declined to expose it....A child whose father did not raise it up was exposed outside the house or in some public place. Anyone who wished might claim it. An absent father might order his pregnant wife to expose her baby as soon as it was born. The Greeks and the Romans thought it peculiar that Egyptians, Germans and Jews exposed none of their children but raised them all.”
- From *A History of Private Life*.

# Contemporary Issues: Homosexuality

- “Keeping a boy for sexual purposes was a minor sin for gentlemen of quality, and their inferiors smiled respectfully. ..Nearly anyone can enjoy sensual pleasure with a member of the same sex...Many men of basically heterosexual bent used boys for sexual purposes....Homosexual and heterosexual love were not distinguished. What was perceived as an underlying continuity between the two was the fact of physical pleasure.”
- From *A History of Private Life*.



# Next Lesson: The Birth of the Church

