

Ancient Rome – First Video Notes

Francis Schaeffer asserts, “to understand the world we are in today, we must trace three lines in history, namely the philosophic, the scientific and the religious.’

1. Philosophic – seeks intellectual answers to the basic questions of life.
2. Science – seeks to understand the material universe and technological advancements
3. Religious efforts seek to define how one lives their life’s as individuals and in society.

Rome

- Had no real answers to basic problems that face all humanity
- Roman (and Greek) gods were amplified humanity – NOT DIETY – not DIVINE
- Roman gods were not infinite (Hebrew God – “I Am” – burning bush)

Limitations –

- Not big enough to bear up under the pressure of real life.
- Did not convey absolutes
- Did not provide foundation for morals, life, values, meaning, purpose and final decisions

Result - Rome as a culture declined and ultimately failed

Julius Caesar (100 – 44 B.C.) – began an authoritative system of governance.

- The senate had lost control
- Rome became lawless
- Power struggles and rivals fought for control
- Self-interest was more significant than the good of the society
- People began. to choose the authoritarian rule of Caesar to bring stability to the land

Plutarch (50 – 120 A. D.)

- Made Caesar dictator for life
- Produced tyranny
- Power in Caesar was absolute
- Power was for life - perpetual

Pontifex Maximus

- Caesar now to be worshiped as the state religion
- Caesar ruled as God – obligatory
- Morals and family life became regulated by the state
- Welfare programs emerged increase dependence on the “state”
- Cruelty and decadence were to logical outworking of this world view
- Violence (gladiators, sacrifice of Christians in the arena) increased
- Self-gratification became the norm (hedonism)
- Sexual abasement (all manner of sexual expressions embraced) rampant
- Greater apathy so more authoritative government, loss of freedoms to enforce demands

People willingly gave up their rights and freedoms because the government promised to protect and preserve them. This led to a tyrannical and authoritative government.

Christianity – totally different basis for understanding life

Fallen humanity makes for a very poor God

- Christian God is infinite – eternal
- Christian God is divine – Holy, without sin, creator, source of life, etc.
- Christian God is knowable – revealed in Jesus Christ, foretold in OT
- Christian God is personal – died for my sins
- Christian God is experienced – prayer answered, healing, deliverance, transformed lives, love,...
- Christian God gives absolutes and universal values
- Christian God gives standards to judge the society in which one lives (value of life, right, wrong, etc.)
- Christian God gives standards to judge the state and society in which they live

Christians refused to worship Caesar as god.

Christians were considered rebels

Christians were committing treason

Christians threatened the authority of the state

Christians were a threat to the unity of the state

Christians rejected the syncretism of the day

Christians maintained there was only one God

Christians were living by the absolute standards of God as revealed in Jesus and OT