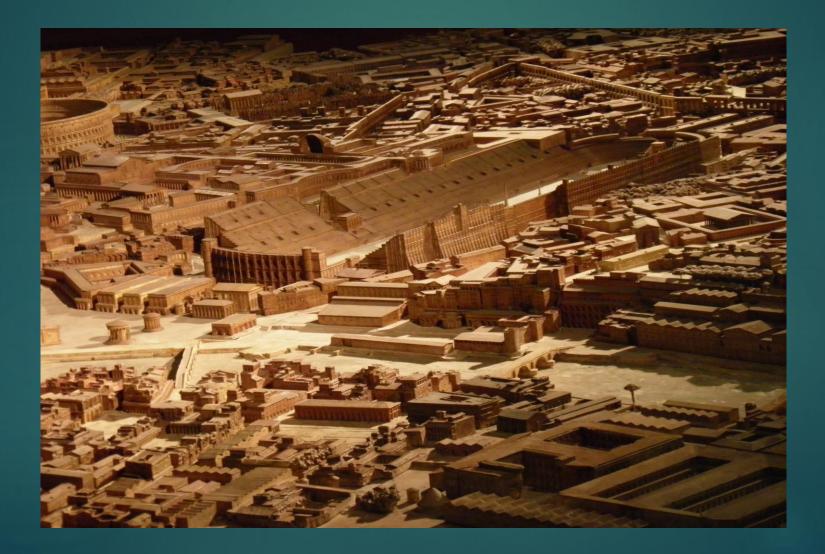
ROME

THE CHURCH IN THE HEART OF THE EMPIRE

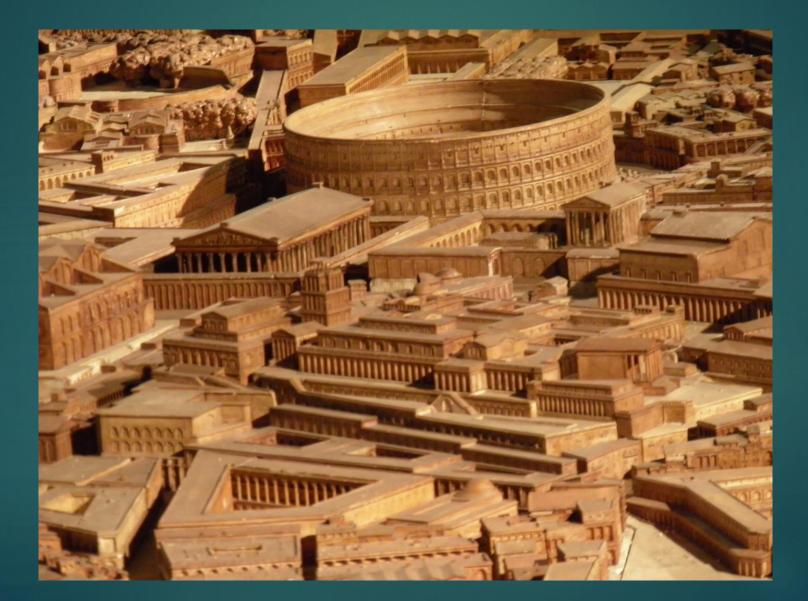
THE CITY OF ROME

- ► Founded in 8th Century B.C.
- Burned by Gauls in 386 B.C., but re-built & became stronger than ever
- Influence expanded around entire Mediterranean
- Evolved from "Roman Republic" to "Roman Empire" during reign of Augustus (c. 27 B.C.)
- Center of government, trade, & a crossroads of ideas from all over the Empire
- Population in NT times approx. 1 million

Circus Maximus (model)



Colosseum (model)



BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

- Establishment not recorded in NT
- Earliest evidence of a church in Rome is Paul's letter (A.D. 57-58)
- Paul says he had never visited Rome (Rom 1:13-15), so not the church's founder
- RCs claim Peter founded the church, but no evidence of this
- Acts 2:10-11 says there were "visitors from Rome" present on Day of Pentecost. Some likely converted & took their new-found faith home with them

Acts 18:2 says Priscilla & Aquila were Jewish Christians who came from Corinth to Rome b/c of "Edict of Claudius" (A.D. 49), so Christianity was there at least by the late 40s

LATER DEVELOPMENTS - PAUL

Letter to Romans indicates a division between Jewish & Gentile Christians

Probably a result of Edict of Claudius: Jews expelled for several yrs. Once returned, re-integration apparently difficult

Led to disagreements over what foods could/couldn't be eaten & the observance of certain "special days"

Paul teaches the primacy of love for one another & willingness to surrender "rights"

DEVELOPMENTS/PAUL (continued)

Eventually visited Rome c. A.D. 60, after arrest in Jerusalem. Claimed right to trial by Caesar's court

- Voyage to Rome long & difficult, but eventually, "we came to Rome" (Acts 28:14)
- Met by brothers from Rome who accompanied them into the city

Paul held under house arrest for 2 yrs. Attempted to evangelize local Jews, but rejected, so turned attention to Gentiles.

Spent remainder of time evangelizing

FIRE OF ROME (A.D. 64)



DEVELOPMENTS/PAUL (cont'd.)

Apparently released after 2 yrs. Preached as far west as Spain (1 Clement) Re-arrested & brought to Rome again around A.D. 64-67 ▶ In A.D. 64, Nero blamed fire of Rome on Christians; resulted in terrible persecutions Eusebius says Paul was beheaded during this time (64-67)

LATER DEVELOPMENTS - PETER

Eusebius says Peter died in Rome about same time as Paul, but by crucifixion Not clear when Peter came to Rome, but wrote 1 Peter from there Refers to Rome as "Babylon" b/c of the evil & persecutions there Peter says he was an elder (1 Peter 5), so

Perer says ne was an erder (TPerer 5), so presumably of the church in Rome

AFTER THE APOSTLES

Clement, a Roman church leader, wrote to Corinth about the beginning of the 2nd Century A.D.

- Letter indicates the influence of the Roman church, since Clement offers advice & exhortation to Corinth
- Also, indicates Roman church continued to suffer persecutions, but had remained steadfast
- Marcion & various Gnostic teachers influenced Rome in 2nd Cent., but generally resisted
- By end of 1st Century, church in Rome, along with many others, had adopted "single-bishop rule"
- In subsequent centuries, church in Rome gained in influence. In 5th Century, "bishop of Rome" designated as "Pope" – father of the church universal

LESSONS FROM ROME

- 1. When we lead someone to Christ, we never know how far the gospel will spread as a result.
- 2. God can use even our adversities to further the kingdom.
- 3. Even the most severe persecution/opposition cannot overpower the church if we remain faithful to our calling.
- 4. Strong churches can (& should) have a positive influence on other churches.
- 5. No church is immune to the dangers of apostasy.