

The Roman Empire during the time of the New Testament

Roman Empire



1. Peace - Pax Romana
2. Roads – Travel
3. Roman Government – Judea and Samaria ruled by Roman procurator (AD 6). Roman citizenship gave great prestige.
4. Language – Latin in the West, Greek in the East.
5. Roman Religion – Sacrifice to the Emperor. Jewish religion was 'religio licita'. Christianity initially seen as Jewish religion.

Roman Emperors

Julio-Claudian Emperors (Birth of Jesus – Death of Paul in Rome)

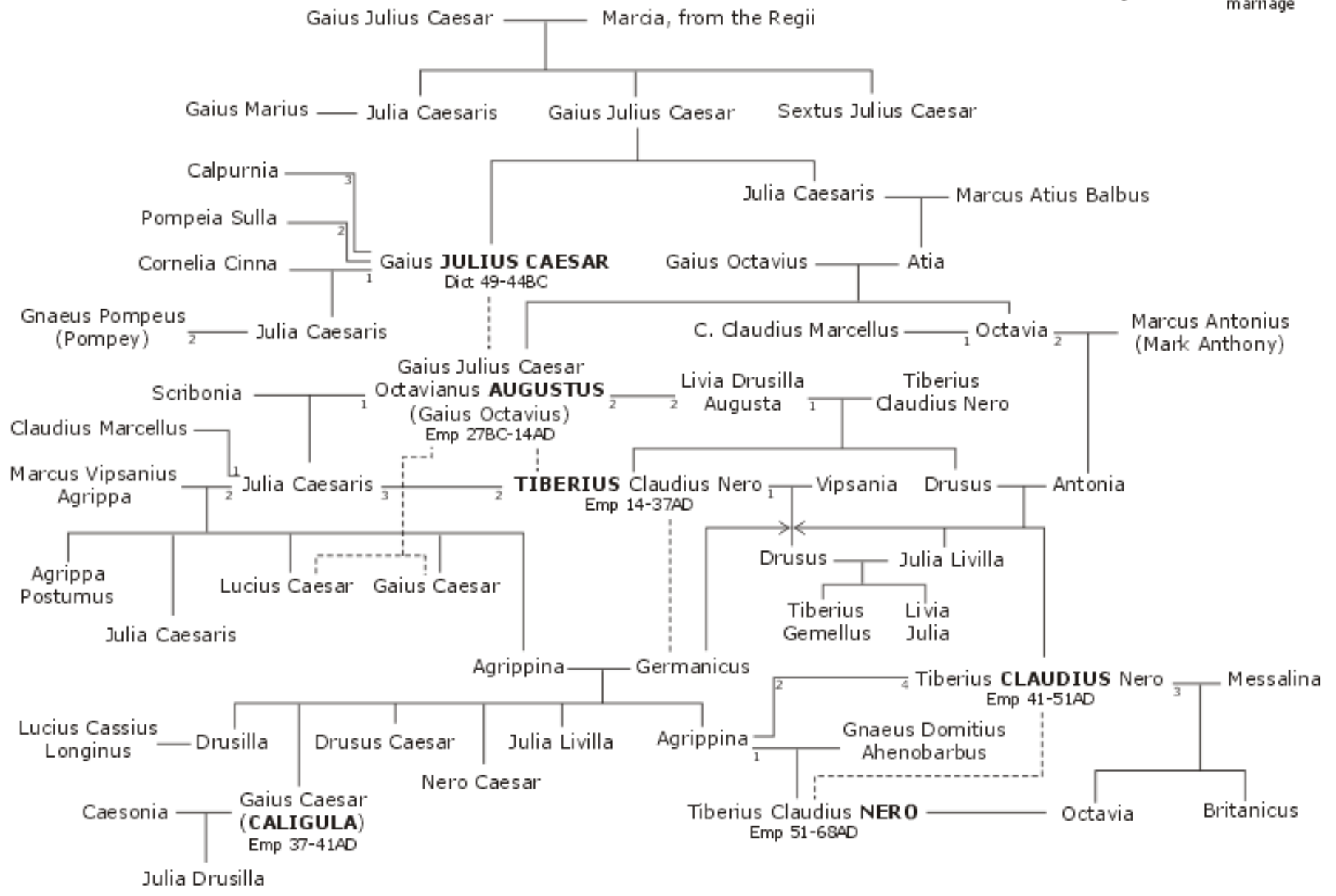
- 1. Augustus Caesar (27 BC - 14AD)**
- 2. Tiberius Caesar (14 - 37)**
- 3. Caligula (37 - 41)**
- 4. Claudius (41 – 54)**
- 5. Nero (54 – 68)**

Flavian Emperors (Siege of Jerusalem – Exile of John on Patmos)

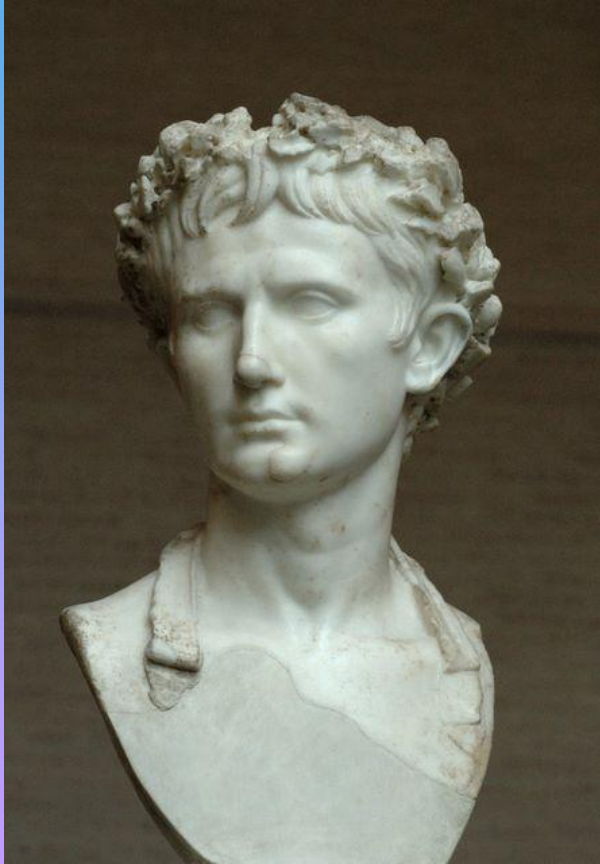
- 1. Vespasian (69 – 79)**
- 2. Titus (79 – 81) son of Vespasian**
- 3. Domitian (81 – 96) son of Vespasian, younger brother of Titus.**

Julio-Claudian Family Tree

| son/daughter
 Emp, emperor
 Dict, dictator
 - - - adopted son
 — marriage
 1,2... number of marriage



Augustus Caesar (63BC – 14AD)



Augustus was the first Emperor of the Roman Empire (27 BC - 14AD)

Pontifex Maximus

Augustus took the title Pontifex Maximus in 12 BC



Pontifex Maximus was the head of the priesthood of Ancient Rome

The office was held for life

People commanded to offer sacrifice to the Emperor

Jews were exempt (religio licita)

The title Pontifex Maximus was retained by the Bishop of Rome after the fall of the Roman Empire.

Caesar Augustus in the robes of Pontifex Maximus

Location: Rome

Tiberius Caesar (42BC –37AD)

Tiberius the General

Born 16 November 42 BC.

Son of Livia and Tiberius Nero (d.32BC)

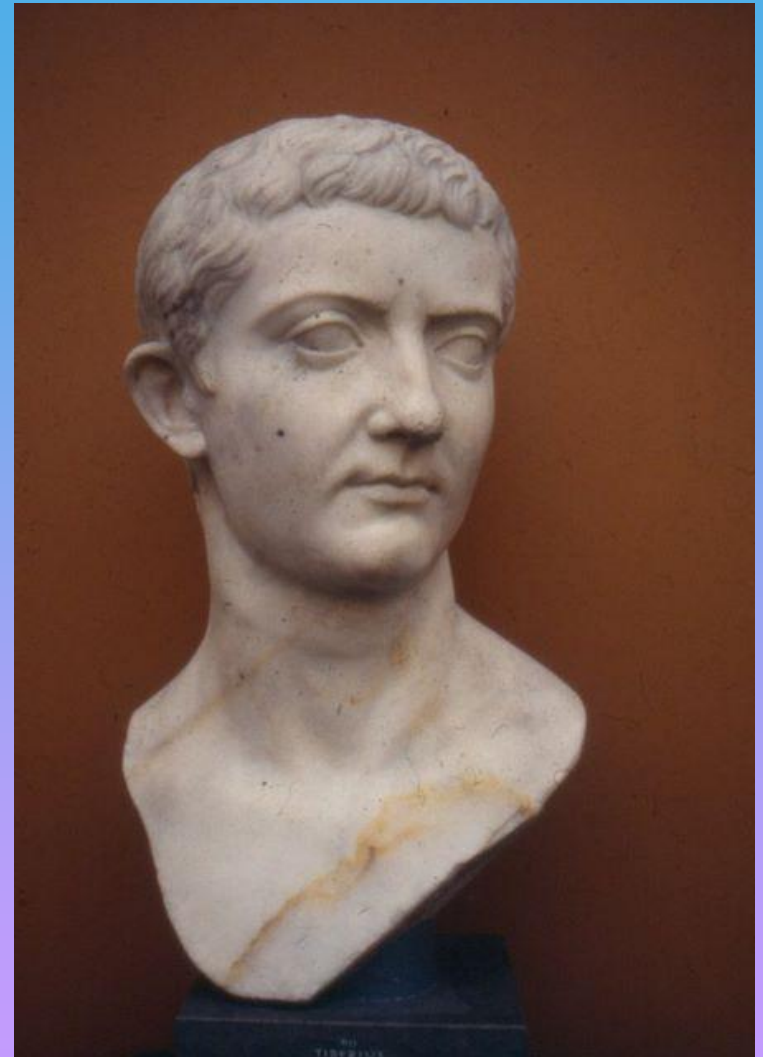
39 BC Livia divorced Tiberius Nero. Married Octavian.

Tiberius married Vipsania (whom he loved) -
Daughter of Marcus Agrippa (1st marriage)

21 BC Marcus Agrippa married Julia (daughter of Augustus). Had five children.

12 BC Death of Marcus Agrippa

Tiberius forced to marry Julia (whom he hated)



Tiberius

6 BC – AD 2 Lived in exile on Rhodes with his astrologer, Thrasyllus.

AD 2 Tiberius forced to divorce Julia (sexual immorality).

Augustus upheld family values.

Julia exiled to island of Ventotene. Julia was not allowed visitors but her mother Scribonia was allowed to go into exile with her.

AD 4 Augustus adopts Tiberius as his son.

AD 12 Co-regent with Augustus

AD 14 Emperor (55 years old)

Scribonia was forced by Tiberius to leave Julia and she died soon after.

Julia died in AD 14 the same year as her father (Augustus).

Either from starvation or sorrow after hearing that her last remaining son had been killed.

Emperor (14-37)



AD 14 Reign of Tiberius begins.

Period of good government (AD14-26/27)

Tiberius resident in Rome

Tiberius attended Senate meetings.

Easily offended – sensitive nature

Livia – domineering mother

Known by name, son of Livia

AD 26-27 Tiberius leaves Rome never returned.

Retired to Capri.

Thrasyllus – his astrologer was with him

Retirement inflamed his suspicions, depressions.

AD 29 Livia dies

Period of unrest (AD 26/27-37)

Tiberius resident in Capri

Tiberius unpopular

Sejanus head of Praetorium guard.

Sejanus acting under the authority of Tiberius – controlled Rome.

Sejanus conspired against imperial family – executions.

Sejanus able to keep people away from Tiberius.

AD 30 Antonia warns Tiberius of Sejanus

AD 31 Tiberius and Sejanus joint consuls

AD 31 Sejanus killed – 18 October

AD 33 Rome in financial crisis

AD 37 Death of Tiberius – 16 March



Caligula (12-41)



Caligula putting the ashes of his mother and brother in the ancestral tomb. Painted by Eustache Le Sueur (1647).

Caligula (12-41)



Caligula ordered his image to be placed in the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

The order was never carried out and Caligula was murdered in AD 41.

Claudius (10BC - 54AD)



Claudius was the uncle of Caligula.

He was made Emperor by the Praetorian Guard.

Claudius reluctantly being made Emperor

Painting by Lawrence Alma-Tadema (c.1871)

Claudius (10BC - 54AD)



Claudius friend of

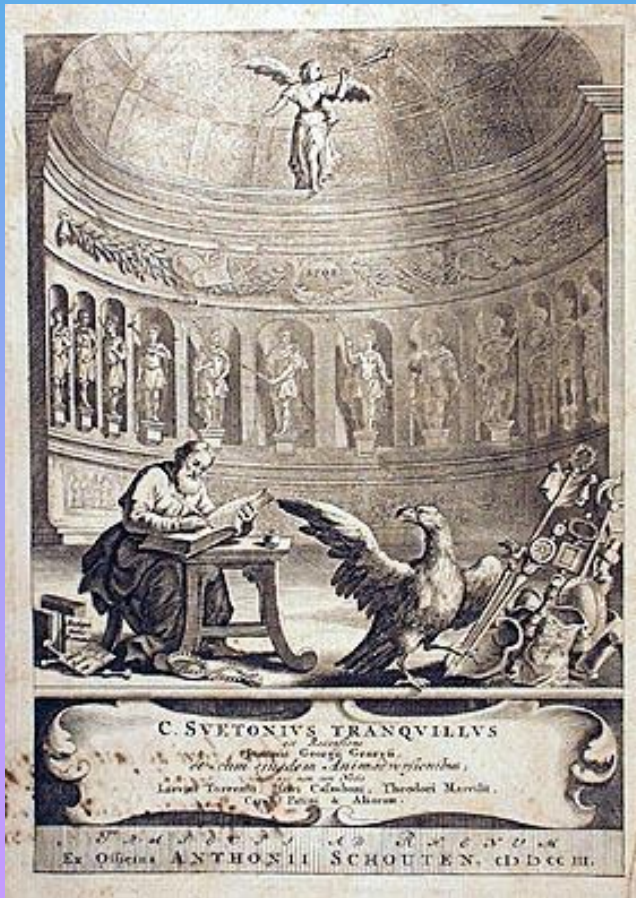
Herod Agrippa (10BC-44AD)

Acts 12

Acts 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of **Claudius** Caesar.

Suetonius (69-c.130)

Roman biographer



SUETONIUS The Twelve Caesars, Claudius, par. 25.

‘He banished from Rome all the Jews, who were continually making disturbances at the instigation of one Chrestus.’

See Acts 18:2

‘And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that **Claudius** had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them.’

Flavius Josephus (c.37-100)

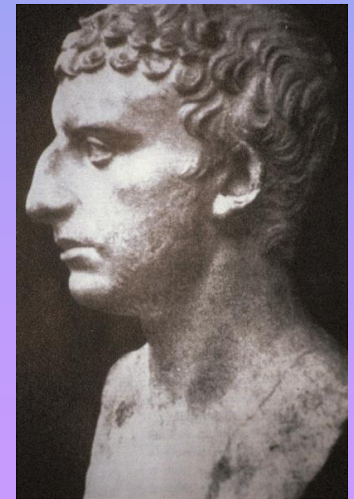


FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS.

Wrote the account of how James was stoned to death in Jerusalem (AD c.62)

Ananus assembled the sanhedrim of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]

Book 20 Chapter 9:1.



Nero (37-68)



The remorse of Nero after killing his mother by John William Waterhouse (1878)

Nero's reign deteriorated after he murdered his tutor, Seneca, and his mother Agrippina. He considered himself artistically gifted.



The Fire of Rome (64)



Tacitus (55-117)

The Annals of Rome (109)

Book XV

Tacitus (55-117)

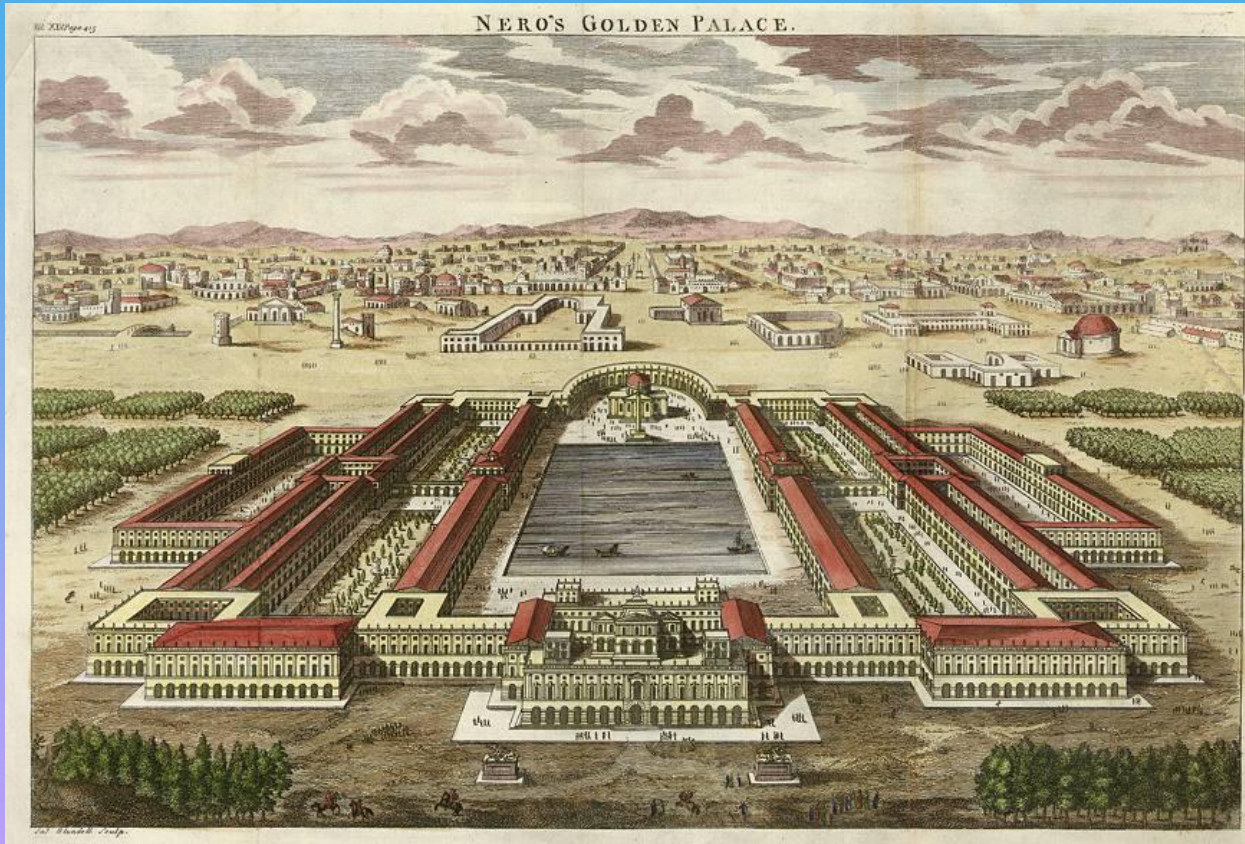
Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace.

Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.

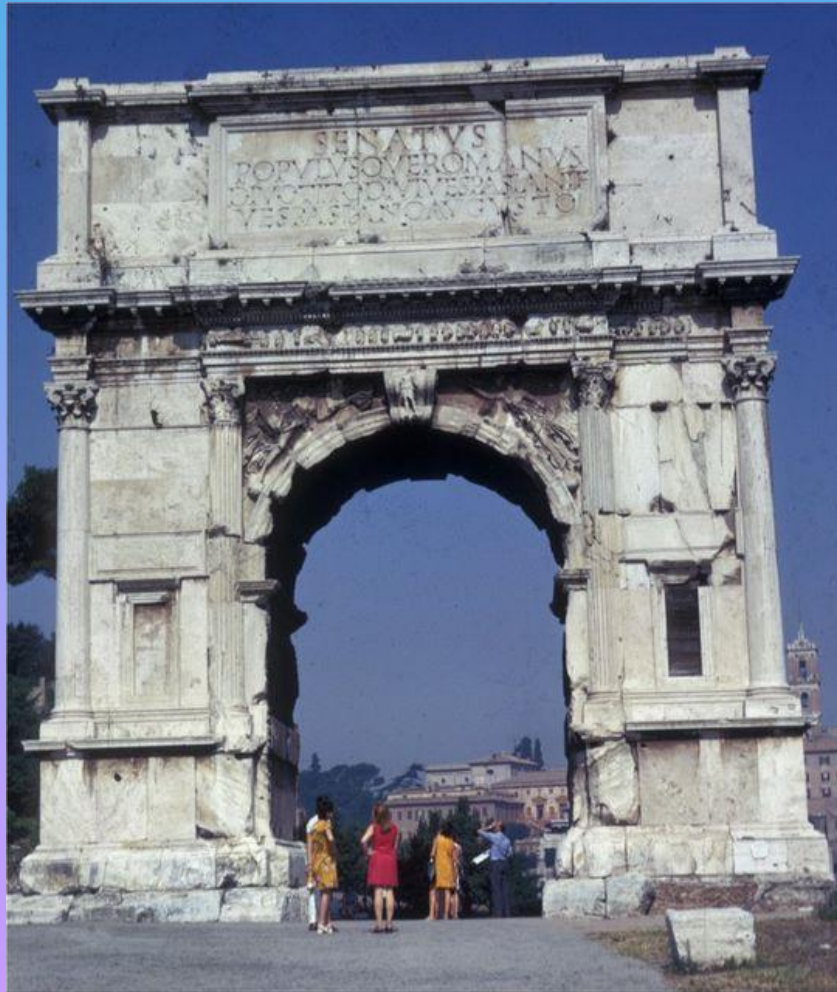
Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.

Nero's Golden Palace and Gardens



Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

Destruction of Jerusalem AD 70



Arch of Titus in Rome commemorating Titus victory over the Jews

Arch of Titus in Rome



Spoils from Jerusalem – Golden Lampstand

Domitian (51-96)



Domitian was the son of Vespasian and the brother of Titus.

The Persecution of Apostle John under Domitian

Eusebius Chapter XVIII

It is said that in this persecution the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word.

Irenaeus, in the fifth book of his work *Against Heresies*, where he discusses the number of the name of Antichrist which is given in the so-called *Apocalypse of John*, speaks as follows concerning him: “If it were necessary for his name to be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the revelation. For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian.”

To such a degree, indeed, did the teaching of our faith flourish at that time that even those writers who were far from our religion did not hesitate to mention in their histories the persecution and the martyrdoms which took place during it.

And they, indeed, accurately indicated the time. For they recorded that in the fifteenth year of Domitian Flavia Domitilla, daughter of a sister of Flavius Clement, who at that time was one of the consuls of Rome, was exiled with many others to the island of Pontia in consequence of testimony borne to Christ.