



# THE CLASSICAL MEDITERRANEAN WORLD





# 1. Greece: Organization and Political Structure



- A. Classical Greek civilization peaked 400 B.C.E.
- B. Organized into city-states
  - Polis – Greek word for city-state
- C. Typical types of government:
  - Tyranny/monarchy – one absolute ruler, usually obtained power through illegal seizure of polis
  - Aristocracy – based on the rule of the wealthy
  - BUT, Athens will promote a new way – democracy!
- D. Two city-states came to dominate: **Athens & Sparta**

## 2. Greece: Athens and Sparta

A. Athens: commercially/economically successful;  
intellectual and cultural achievements

- Pericles considered greatest ruler
  - Favored direct democracy – rule through vote by citizens (landowning males)
  - Ordered construction of the Parthenon to highlight power





## 2. Greece: Athens and Sparta

B. Sparta = strong military-based oligarchy

- Dominated surrounding city-states through force
- Not as commercially powerful, depended on network of slaves





- A. Persian Wars
  - Greece pushes East for land while Persia pushes West
  - Athens and Sparta band together to fight Persia
  - Persia retreats
    - Greece strong at sea
    - Xerxes begins losing control of Persian Empire



- B. Peloponnesian Wars
  - Eventually, Sparta and Athens fight for control of Greece
  - Greatly weakens Greece, allows Philip II of Macedon to invade (around 350 B.C.E.)





### 3. Alexander the Great

- A. Alexander the Great continues quest of his father, conquers Greece, Egypt, Persia, beyond (died 323 B.C.E.)
  - Empire lasts briefly, influence would lasts centuries
  - Hellenistic Period – Greek culture fuses with Persian, Egyptian culture
    - Spread influence of Greeks well beyond Greece
    - Established important centers of trade and intellect, such as Alexandria, Egypt



## 4. Rome – Society and Politics



- **A. Two phases of ancient Roman history: Republic & Empire**
  - **Republic founded 509 B.C.E.**
    - Representative government – citizens (free-born males) vote for leaders
  - Empire phase overlaps Republic, but truly begins after death of Julius Caesar





- **B. Social groups**

- Patricians – landowners, aristocrats
- Plebeians – farmers, artisans, merchants (could vote, but not hold office)
- Slaves – captured during military campaigns, mostly agricultural work

- Political structure of Roman Republic
  - Twelve Tables – first written Roman laws
- Prevented laws from being misinterpreted
- Became foundation of Roman Republic





- Senate – originally 300 members; landowning aristocrats
- Consuls – two officials elected by Senate
  - One commanded army, one directed government workings
  - Limited to one year, couldn't be elected again for 10 years
  - One consul could veto (override) another
- Dictator – elected in times of crisis, absolute power over laws and military
  - Limited to six months





## 5. Rome: Collapse and Caesar

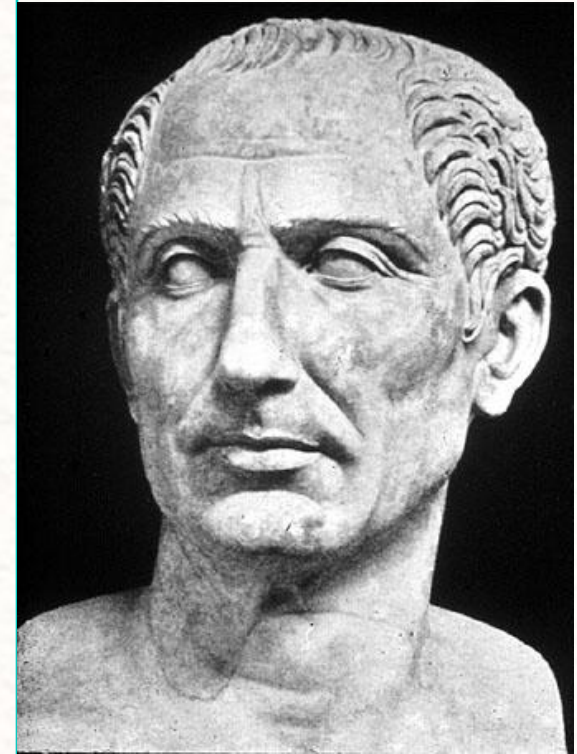
- **A. Collapse of the Republic**
  - 1. Growth of empire: weakened control
  - 2. Economic problems
    - Huge gap between wealthy elite and rest of society
    - Large slave population (1/3)
    - Cities overrun by unemployed farmers, artisans
  - 3. Problems in the military
    - Reliance on mercenaries, loyal only to commanders/\$
    - Made possible for a commander to force himself into power



- **B. Rise of the emperors**

- Julius Caesar

- Successful politician and general, declared himself governor of Gaul (France) in 58 B.C.E.
    - Struggle between Caesar and his enemies ensues, (senators fear popularity) Caesar triumphs
    - Elected dictator in 46 B.C.E., dictator for life in 44 B.C.E.
    - Many Senators feared or were jealous of Caesar's power
      - Assassinated in 44 B.C.E.



## – C. Civil War

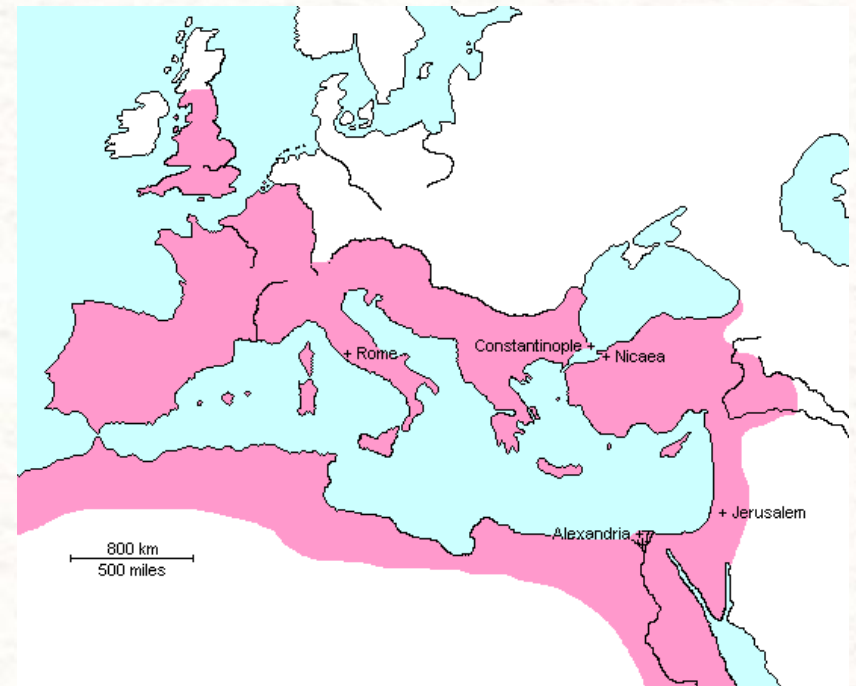
- After death of Caesar, power is juggled between three men
  - Octavian, Mark Antony, Lepidus
  - After series of battles for control, Octavian declared first emperor
    - Takes title, “Imperator Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus”
    - Oversees beginning of longest period of Roman prosperity, called “Pax Romana” – Roman peace



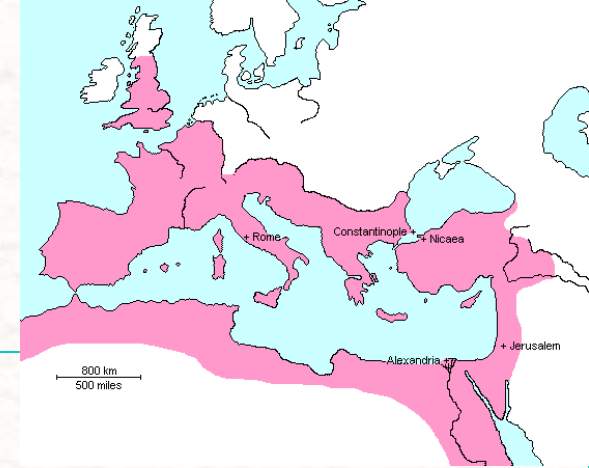


## 6. Rise of Christianity

- **A. Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., Mediterranean World was melting pot of religious ideas and practices**
  - Mix of polytheistic beliefs (Greeks, Romans) and monotheistic (Judaism, Zoroastrianism)



## 6. Rise of Christianity



- **B. Where did Christianity come from?**
  - Jewish kingdom of Judea taken over by Rome in 63 B.C.E.
  - Roman law became more oppressive
  - Many Jews believed a messiah would restore the kingdom
  - Popularity of Jesus was a concern to both Roman and Jewish leaders
    - Disrupted local leadership, teachings considered blasphemous
    - Arrest ordered; sentenced to death by crucifixion (common death penalty)



- **C. Why/how did Christianity become popular?**
  - Pax Romana (Roman Peace) made it easy and safe to travel – ideas travel with people
  - Common languages – Greek and Latin
  - A belief system that ignored wealth, status, nationality
- **D. Reaction by Roman government**
  - At first: seen as opposition to Roman law and culture
    - Thousands crucified, burned, tortured for punishment/entertainment



- Eventually, grew popular enough to be officially accepted
- 312 C.E. – Emperor Constantine wins battle, credits Christian god
  - Edict of Milan – Christianity becomes approved religion
- 380 C.E. – Emperor Theodosius makes Christianity official religion, thinking it would bring order to the empire



# Roman Empire by 180 C.E.



BACK