

Rumors of a Better King



DAYLIGHT PREVIEW

Just What Rome Needed

History has a way of converging the paths of many stories into one huge narrative. Consider these diverse elements: The fall of mankind; the Abrahamic covenant; the rise of Alexander the Great; the ascendance of Rome. These stories converge in Rome, according to Joe Stowell, at just the right time. Christianity came to the most powerful nation in the world to meet the great needs of the people—just as God had planned it.

COME TOGETHER

Icebreaker Questions

1. Joe Stowell points out that Adam and Eve fell because they chose to live by their own will, saying in effect, “I will have it how I want it.” According to your family (or others who knew you well), to what degree were you a “strong-willed child”?
2. How much do you enjoy watching documentaries about history or reading books about history?

3. You might be surprised as Joe talks about life for the majority of the residents of ancient Rome. What were the most crowded conditions you've lived in or temporarily experienced?



FINDING DAYLIGHT

Experience the Video

Feel free to jot down Video Notes as you watch the presentation by Joe Stowell. Use the space below for those notes.

VIDEO NOTES

The story of the fall

The long wait for a redeemer

God's covenant promise

Israel waited for the Messiah

Alexander's conquest

The Romans take over

Right time for global commission

Life in Rome

Augustus Caesar

Rumors of a better king



WALKING IN THE DAYLIGHT

Discussion Time

DISCOVER GOD'S WORD

Discussion/Application Questions

1. **Joe Stowell begins this session by noting that the story of the rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire actually starts at the beginning of time. Read Genesis 3:1–15.**
 - a. Given the freedom to make choices, including the opportunity to enjoy God and all His creation, how do we see the heart of man saying, “I will have it how I want it”?
 - b. Discuss the meaning of this: God came into the garden and called Adam and Eve back to himself.
 - c. How do we see God promising that someday He would send a redeemer to restore humanity’s relationship with Him, and conquer once and for all the sin and evil all of us inherit by the fall?

2. **Down the family line of Adam and Eve came Abraham, with the promise on *his* heart; and God told Abraham about His future plans for blessing the world. Read about that in Genesis 12:1–3.**

How would God ultimately bless all peoples on earth through Abraham and his descendants?

3. **God’s promise didn’t end there. Read about His promise to King David, Israel’s great king, in 2 Samuel 7:1–13.**

- a. What did David want to build for God?

- b. What did God promise to build for David instead?

4. **As the Jewish people waited for the coming of their promised Messiah, this King who would sit on the throne of David forever, the history of the world made some compelling turns.**

How did Alexander the Great’s massive conquest and his transportation of the Greek language and culture everywhere he went, provide the platform for both what became the Roman Empire and the rapid spread of Christianity?

5. What was surprising to you about Joe's description of daily life for the working class in first-century Rome?

6. Octavian, who lived from 63 BC to AD 14, was the first Roman emperor. He became emperor, in essence, when he defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium in 31 BC. The title *Augustus*, which means "exalted," was conferred upon Octavian by the Roman Senate in 27 BC. Replacing the Roman Republic with an imperial form of government, Augustus was able to incorporate the entire Mediterranean world into the empire, launch the renowned *Pax Romana* ("Roman Peace"), and initiate the golden age of Roman culture.

Under Augustus Caesar, the Roman Empire achieved a new level of governmental unity, economic stability and prosperity, and infrastructure development. How did all this lend itself to what God was doing, as Paul said in Galatians 4:4, in the "fullness of time"?

7. Augustus and the emperors who followed him were not only ruthlessly violent in order to cling to their power, but they also often required the subjects of the empire to recognize the emperors as divine. In the midst of this kind of world emerged a voice that said, "There is a better King, and a better kingdom. And in it everyone matters, and there is peace for mankind."

What would be the eventual fate of that voice, and the fate of the movement He spawned?

BRINGING IT HOME

Like Adam and Eve, we have the choice to "have it how we want it" or to enjoy God and all His creation.

Which is better? Why?

DAYLIGHT ON PRAYER

Spending Time with God

1. Pray for yourself and the other members of your group to choose God's way—enjoying Him and His creation—rather than your own way.
2. What other prayer requests would you like to share with the group?

DAYLIGHT AHEAD

While Rome was dominating the world, in faraway Israel a little baby was born who would change everything. Once Jesus' mission on earth—His death, burial, and resurrection—was made known to the people of Rome through His followers, they found themselves in a land where cruelty and state-sanctioned killings had become popular entertainment. This new faith, with its components of love and mercy, did not seem to be a perfect fit for Rome. But as Joe Stowell points out in Session 3—that is precisely why it was just the right time to take Christianity to Rome.