

Early Christianity: The Greco-Roman Context (i)

February 7, 2006

- "The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome"
- Urbanization, provincialization: a world of cities
- An age of expectations?

Next time: Paul and the first urban Christians

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- **Lectures** will be slightly out of order.
 - Paul and the first urban Christians
Thursday 2/9
 - Religion and piety in the Graeco-Roman world, Tuesday 2/14
- PLEASE keep up with the normal order of the **readings**.

"The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome"

- Debates over "Roman Imperialism"
 - Roman martial spirit of conquest
- **vs**
 - Swept into a network of Hellenistic diplomacy and warfare
- Conquest and appropriation from second century BCE on.
- From "republic" to "empire": The age of Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE)

From “republic” to “empire”: The age of Augustus

- Civil War in Rome: Sulla, Pompey, Caesar
- Expansion into the Near East: 66 BCE
 - End of the last successors to the Seleucid kingdom
 - Ptolemaic kingdom survives (as a Roman zone of operation) to battle of Actium, 31 BCE

Urbanization and provincialization: a world of cities

- Urban territories and provincial society
- Monumental cities
- *Evergetism*, benefaction
- Urban cults
 - Punctuate city calendar
 - articulate civic order and ranking
 - Rituals of belonging and loyalty
- Anxieties and competition (Tacitus on Nero; Pliny & Trajan on Bithynia)



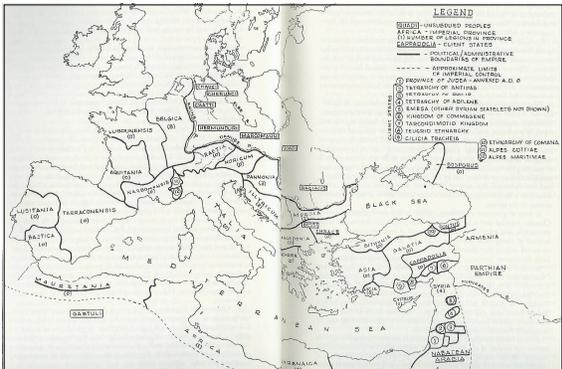
Pergamum: Temple to Demeter (Hellenistic)



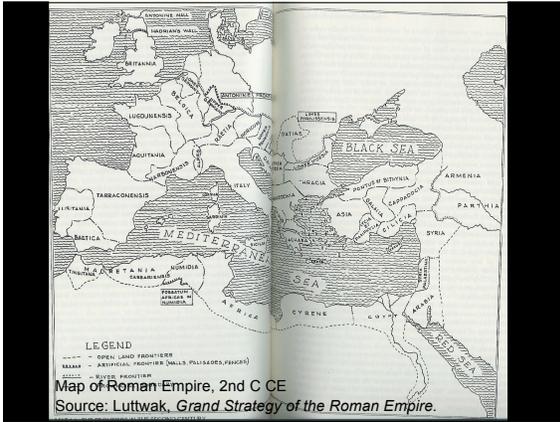
Pergamum: Asklepeion



Ephesus



Map of Roman World, 23 CE. Source: Luttwak, *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*.





An age of expectations?

- Virgil's Fourth Eclogue: heralding a glorious age
- Third Sybilline Oracle II. 350–362
- Decree of the Asian League (Priene ca. 9 BCE)



Third Sybilline Oracle II. 350–362

However much wealth Rome received from tribute-bearing Asia, Asia will receive three times that much again from Rome, and will repay her deadly arrogance to her Often the mistress will cut your delicate hair and, dispensing justice, will cast you from heaven to earth but from earth will again raise you up to heaven, because mortals are involved in a wretched and unjust life.



Decree of the Asian League (Priene ca. 9 BCE)

Whereas providence that orders all our lives has in her beneficence granted to us and those who will come after us [a savior] who has made war to cease and who shall put everything [in peaceful order]; and whereas Caesar, [when he was manifest], transcended the expectations of [all ...] with the result that the birthday of our God signaled the beginning of good news (*euangelion*) for the world because of him the Greeks in Asia decreed that the new year begin for all the cities on September 23 [=Augustus' birthday]
