

A BRIEF LOOK AT THE WORLD DURING THE APOSTOLIC AGE

At the time when the Church was born, the world was divided into two categories, from religious perspective, Jews and Pagans. However, from a political perspective, there were two powers, Roman which controlled most of the known world at that time including Jerusalem where the Church was born and Persia which controlled the Far East.

A. Jews

1. Political Situation: When the Roman General, Pompey conquered Jerusalem during 63 BC, Judea became a Roman state. The Romans set Herod as governor and a symbol for Caesar. From that time, all Jews were looking for the Savior and Messiah who would deliver them and conquer the Roman power and rebuild the Kingdom of David, of course anticipating with a materialistic perspective.

2. Social and Economical Situations: Were extremely bad and the parables that the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in the Holy Gospel, in addition to their spiritual meanings, express these bad situations such as midnight's friend (Luke 11:5-7), the lost coin (Luke 15:8-9), the poor in the parable of the Great Feast (Luke 14: 21-23) and the men doing nothing in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-7). All these parables reflect the bad economical and social situations at that time. On the other hand, there was an elite rich class whom only thought about themselves and how they could increase their wealth without a care regarding the poor as the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in the parable of rich fool (Luke 12:6-12).. In addition to this, high taxes were collected by tax collectors some for Rome and some for the Temple. Due to all of this unemployment, robbery, and murdering were very common occurrence at that time and the parable of Good Samaritan who rescued a Jew traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and attacked by robbers (Luke 10:30) reflected such situation.

3. Religious Situation: Most of the Jews of that time were morally corrupted and were labeled in the New Testament "children of serpents" (Matthew 3:7), "children of Satan" (John 8:44) and "hard necks" (Acts 7:51). Josephus mentioned about the people being corrupted and evil and deserving the judgment of God which was fulfilled by destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. They only cared about the Law literally not spiritually. However, they acquired treasures and many colonies in the most of the states comprising the Roman Empire. The Greek were very common in Judea. Since the First Century before the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jews began to preach in many regions and this is clear from the Lord Jesus Christ's speech to the Pharisees and Scribes "*How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You sail the sea and cross whole countries to win one convert; and when you succeed, you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are*" Matthew 23:15. The Septuagint of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek attributed to the conversion of Gentiles to Judaism. The Jewish powers at that time were the Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, and Essenes.

B. Pagans

In the First Century there were many philosophies, however, Epicurean and Stoic philosophies were the most widely accepted. Some philosophers were atheists and others believed in one god or many gods. The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers believed that fulfillment could be achieved in this life through emotional calm and impassivity. The Epicureans pursued pleasure in the life through the materialistic life denying the need for religion or god's care and believed that gods lived away from people denying life after death. Epicureans' motto was "let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" and so St. Paul referred to this in the Holy Book of First Corinthians 15:32.

Stoics believed in one god and one spirit from which all creations exist and to which all creations end. They believed that mind and logic were the most important godly gifts to the man. Stoic

philosophy entailed that all human beings are god's children. It was a religion for those people who were seeking good at that time. They believed that the core of all creations is the LOGOS. Their philosophers especially Xenon called for renouncing and good deeds.

St Paul described the state of moral corruption that was prevalent in that time in his Holy Epistle to Romans 1:18-32. Romans changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and birds and four footed animals and creeping things. Human sacrifices for pagans were very common especially for Moloch as described by Pliny the Elder. The pagans' rituals also involved adultery and sexual immoralities especially in the temples of Aphrodite the "god of beauty" of the Greeks in Corinth. St. Paul described in the Holy Book of Romans different types of moral and sexual corruption.

Romans and Greeks encouraged killing of their children for poverty or if they were ill with non-curable diseases. Aerostat encouraged abortion to prevent overpopulation. Appleton called for killing of children if they are of evil parents, old parents, or illegal. Romans believed the same Greek ideas as described by their historian Suetonius.

Romans and Greeks disrespected woman and thought that a woman was just a servant for man and for his flesh's pleasure. They didn't respect marriage as Christianity was doing. Appleton called the main goal of marriage as getting healthy children for a good society. It was adulteresses for most of high ranked Greeks and Romans. Seneca mentioned at that time there were no woman of virtue and polygamy and divorce were commonplace. Adultery and moral corruption were prominent features of those times. The Royal family was example of this corruption as mentioned by Seneca in his discourse concerning what Messalina, Kildee's' wife did to fulfill her immorality and sexual desires.

Homosexuality, gay and lesbianism, were main practices of Romans and Greeks as St. Paul mentioned in his Holy Epistle to the Romans. Slavery was another common practice of that time. In conclusion this era had multiple types of corruption and immoralities.

Politically, the Roman Empire was the only power of that time, its government and properties extended in all three continents of the old world, Europe, Asia and Africa. Caesar assigned governors for all Roman states under a central authority in Rome. Although the world militarily was controlled by the Romans it was controlled culturally by the Greeks where Hellenistic culture was everywhere in the world at that time. Beside Rome there were Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Azmer, and Torsos. Some Roman states had their own government based on their culture yet still were under control of the Roman central authority. The peace and security found within the Roman empire at that time allowed for the free moving and traveling of the Apostles to preach and teach inside all Roman states.