

CLAH4006

**From Village to Empire: An
Introduction to the History of Rome**

**Vespasian (AD 69-79) and
Titus (AD 79-81)**

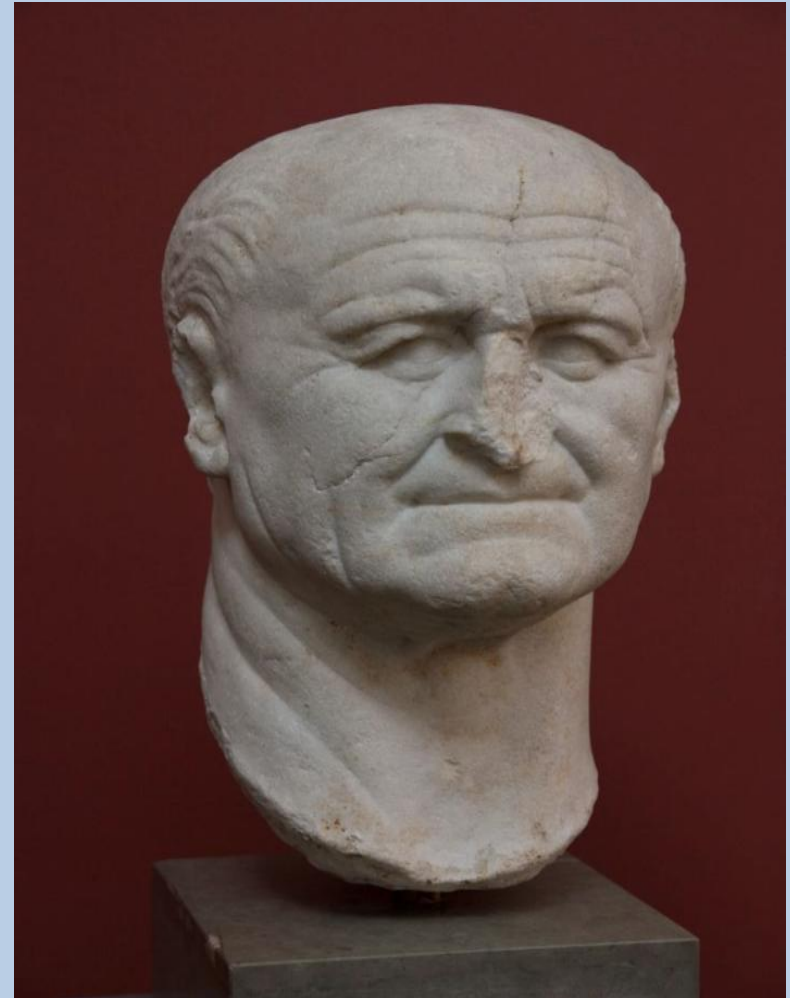
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The Flavian Dynasty: Vespasian

**1st of July/December AD 69
to 23rd of June AD 79**

Vespasian

- Titus Flavius **Vespasianus**.
- Legate of the II Augusta during Claudius invasion of Britain (AD 43).
- Suffect consul in AD 51.
- Proconsul in Africa (c. AD 63).
- Accompanied Nero on his tour of Greece (AD 66).
- Appointed commander of military forces in Judean campaign (late AD 66).



Lex de imperio Vespasiani

“...it shall be lawful for him to make a treaty with whomever he shall wish, just as it was lawful for the divine Augustus... Tiberius... and Claudius... to convene the senate... to pass decrees by report and division... and that whomever, when they seek a magistracy, power, *imperium*, or care of anything, he shall commend to the senate and the people of Rome... it be lawful for him to advance and extend the *pomerium*... and in whatever statutes and plebiscites it is written down... the *imperator* Caesar Vespasian should be released from those statutes and plebiscites... [decrees have the force of law]...” – **CIL VI. 930 = ILS 244.**

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 THVLLIOCAESARI AVG TIBERIOQVECLAVDIOCAESARI AVGGERMANICO
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 GERMANICO
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 GERMANICVS TENERINTVR IISLEGIBVSPIEBISQVESCITISIMPCAESAR
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 CLAVDIVMCAESAREM AVG GERMANICVMFACEREPOROVIT
 EA OMNIAIMPCKESARIVESPASIANO AVG FACERE LICEAT
 VTIQVEQVAEANTEHANCLEGEMROGATAMACIAGESTA
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Bronze tablet in the Vatican Museum

Holding the Consulship



Vespasian Denarius. January-June, 71 AD. IMP CAES VESP AVG P M, laureate head right / TRIPOT II COS III P P, Pax seated left with cauduceus & branch. – **RIC 41; BMC 61.**

- Tribunician powers for the second time.
- Consulship for the third time.

“Vespasian celebrated a triumph over the Jews on his return to Rome, and added eight more Consulships to the one he had already earned. He also assumed the office of censor...” – **Suetonius *Divus Vespasian* 8.1.**

Family History

- Presented as having a relatively humble family history.
- “...The Flavii, admittedly an obscure family, none of whose members had ever enjoyed high office, at last brought stable government to the empire... Titus Flavius Petro, a citizen of Reate, who fought for Pompey in the civil war as a centurion or perhaps a reservist... secured an honourable discharge and took up debt collecting... his son Sabinus... became a customs supervisor in Asia, where several cities honoured him with statues inscribed ‘To an Honest Customs Officer’. He later turned banker among the Helvetii, and there died leaving a wife, Vespasia Polla, and two sons, Sabinus and Vespasian...” – **Suetonius *Divus Vespasian* 1.**

Denigration of Nero's Memory

- Hostility expressed in Flavian period sources - Tacitus mentions Cluvius Rufus, Pliny the Elder, and Fabius Rusticus as sources. Influences later authors.
- Vespasian advertises divine portents and omens which portended his accession.

[Speech of Josephus] “For what purpose do you sent me to Nero?... You are to be Caesar, O Vespasian, and Emperor, you, and this your son. Tie me now still more securely, and keep me for yourself, for you, Caesar, are not only master over me, but over the land, and the sea, and all the human race; and certainly I deserve to be punished by closer custody than now, if I fabricate anything about God.” When he had said this, Vespasian at that time did not believe him, supposing that Josephus came up with this as a cunning trick to save himself. But after a little while he came to have faith in this, for God was already raising in him thoughts of obtaining the Empire, and by other signs foreshadowing his advancement.” – **Josephus** *The Jewish War* 3.8.9.

Raising Taxes

“His one serious fault was avarice... [restored duties remitted by Galba and imposed heavier ones]... and sometimes doubled the tribute from the provinces, and openly engaged in business dealings that would have disgraced even a private citizen... he sought nothing of exacting fees from candidates for public office or selling pardons to the innocent and guilty alike... Still, the more credible view is that the emptiness of both the public treasury and imperial exchequer forced Vespasian into heavier taxation and unethical business dealings; he declared himself that 40,000 million sesterces were needed to put the state in order...” – **Suetonius *Divus Vespasian* 16.**

Conflict and Revolt

The Revolt of Civilis and Classicus

- Julius Sabinus, chieftain of the Lingones revolts.
- In AD 69 supports Vespasian. Julius Civilis (chieftain of the Batavians) invites independent German tribes to join his attack on Vitellian forces on lower Rhine. Openly declares himself a rebel.
- Two chiefs of the Treviri, Julius Classicus and Tutor also rebel (early AD 70) to create an “empire of the Gauls”, agree a secret compact with Civilis.
- Garrisons at Vetera and Moguntiacum captured and pressed into service.
- Break between the German party of Civilis and the Gallic party of Classicus.
- Army sent under Q. Petillius Cerialis to put down rebels who are defeated at Trevirorum (Trier) and Vetera.

“In the province of Germany various uprisings against the Romans took place that are not worth being mentioned by me, at least, but there was one incident that must cause surprise. A certain Julius Sabinus, one of the foremost of the Lingones, collected by his own efforts an independent force of his own and took the name of Caesar, claiming to be a descendant of Julius Caesar. Upon being defeated in several engagements he fled to a country estate, where he descended into a subterranean vault beneath a monument, which he first burned to the ground. His pursuers thought that he had perished in the flames, but as a matter of fact he remained hidden there with his wife for nine years and had two sons by her. The troubles in Germany were settled by Cerialis in the course of numerous battles, in one of which so great a multitude of Romans and barbarians was slain that the river flowing near by was dammed up by the bodies of the fallen.” – **Dio Cassius 65.3.**

Conquest in Britain

“...Vespasian... restored stable government to Britian, there came a succession of great generals and splended armies... Petilius Cerealis at once [attacked] the state of the Brigantes... Petelius... conquered the major part of their territory... Julius Frontinus... subdued by force of arms the strong and warlike nation of the Silures...” – **Tacitus *Agricola* 17.**



Great Jewish Revolt – AD 66-73

Underlying Causes

- Tensions between pro-Roman ruling class and large sections of the population.
- Herodian dynasty philhellenic – controversial for the more conservative factions.
- Nationalist and religious ideology – zealots.
- Tactlessness of some Roman administrators - Gessius Florus, procurator (AD 64-66) looted money from the Temple.

Specific Catalysts and Events

- Conflict in Caesarea Maritima.
- Jewish delegation mistreated by Gessius Florus.
- Florus demands 17 talents (c. 120,000 denarii) from the Temple for “Caesar’s needs”.
- Agitation against Florus, Agrippa II flees Jerusalem.
- Roman garrison of Jerusalem is massacred.
- Factional strife between Greek and Jewish communities in coastal cities.

Vespasian and Titus

- Gestius Gallus (legate of Syria) initial marches on Jerusalem – retreats to coast (disaster at Beth Horon – AD 66).
- Vespasian (with Titus) sent to put down rebellion – AD 67.
- Vespasian becomes Emperor – AD 69.
- Titus left to put down rebellion.



Sack of Jerusalem – AD 70



“While the Temple was ablaze the victors plundered everything... and slaughtered wholesale all who were caught.” - **Josephus *Jewish Wars* 6.325.**



Siege of Masada AD 72/73.

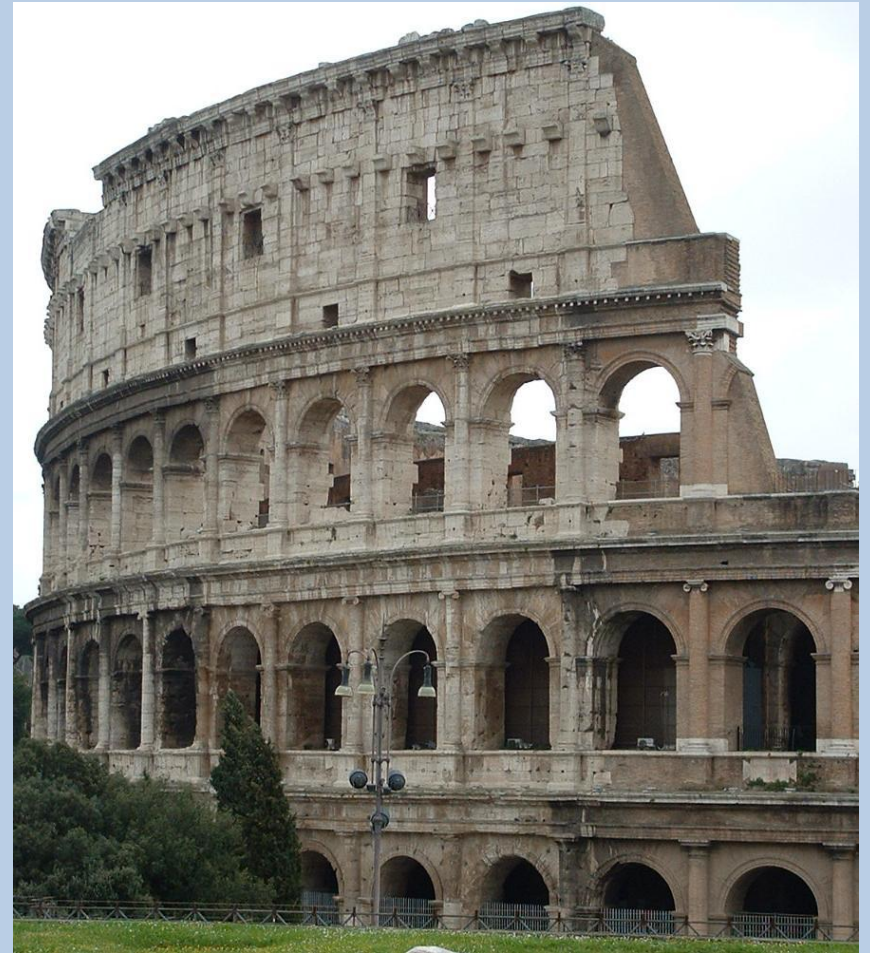
Aftermath

- The Temple was not to be rebuilt.
- The High Priesthood and the Sanhedrin were abolished.
- The Temple tax was to be paid directly to Capitoline Jupiter (i.e. the Roman treasury).
- Large swathes of Jewish land become Imperial property.
- Remaining Tensions – Kitos War (AD 115-17); Bar Kokhba Revolt (AD 132-35).

Building Programme

Flavian Amphitheatre

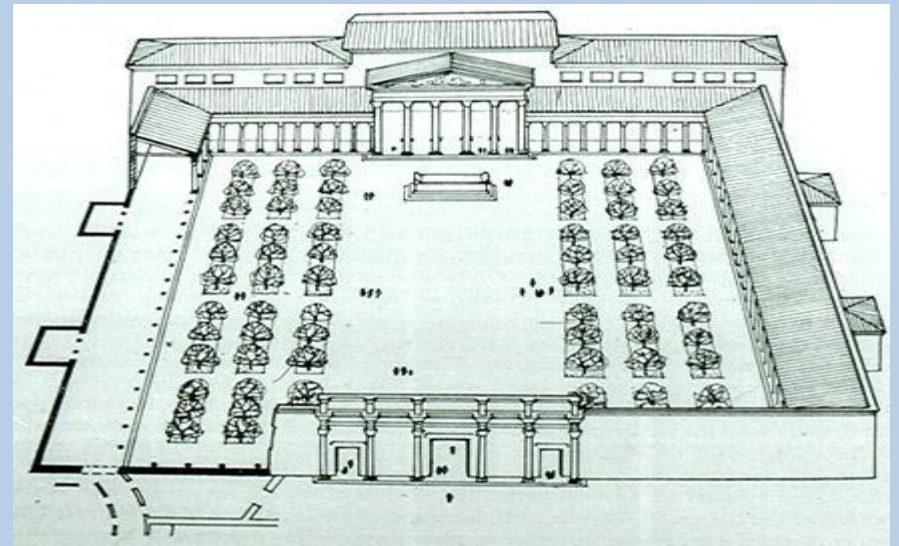
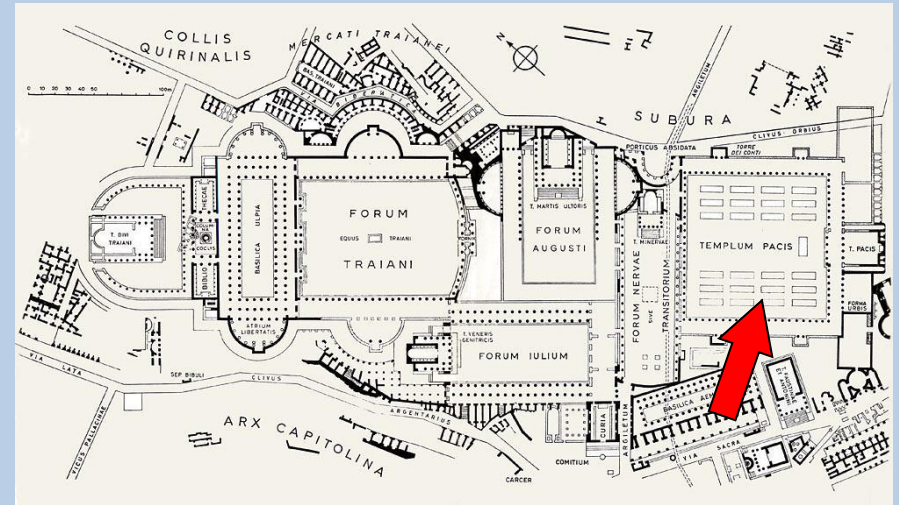
- Work begun in AD 70, but not inaugurated until Titus' reign.
- Booty of Jewish war helped pay for construction.
- Built on the drained lake that was part of Nero's Domus Aurea.



The Temple / Forum of Peace

- Dedicated in AD 75.

“The most famous or the works of art in Rome... were originally brought to Rome by Nero’s looting and placed around the private rooms of the Domus Aurea, but were since dedicated by the emperor Vespasian to the Temple of Peace and his other buildings.” – **Pliny NH 34.84.**



Death of Vespasian

- Dies on the 23rd of June AD 79.

“During his ninth and last consulship Vespasian visited Campania and was bothered by slight attacks of fever... he made things worse by bathing in cold water and irritating his stomach... he carried on with his imperial duties... until he almost fainted after a sudden burst of violent diarrhoea...” – **Suetonius** ***Divus Vespasian 24.***

“His deathbed joke was ‘O my, I must be changing into a god.’ (23).

Deification

“And when he died the famous comedian Favor, who had been chosen to wear his funeral mask in the procession and give the customary imitations of his gestures and words, shouted to the stewards, ‘Hey! How much will all this cost?’ ‘Ten million sesterces,’ they replied. ‘Then I’ll take a hundred thousand down, and you can just pitch me into the Tiber.’” - **Suetonius *Divus Vespasian* 19.**



“The Senate and the People of Rome dedicate this temple to the Deified Emperor Vespasian. The Emperors Severus and Caracalla restored it.” – ***ILS* 255 = *CIL* 6.938.**

The Flavian Dynasty:

Titus

**23rd of June AD 79 to 13th of
September AD 81**

Titus

- **Titus** Flavius Vespasianus.
- Close friend of Britannicus.
- Has one child, Julia, by Marcia Furnilla (divorced c. AD 64).
- Served in Germany and Britain as military tribune before becoming a questor (AD 65?).
- AD 67 – accompanies his father to Judaea.
- Made Consul in AD 70.
- Given *tribunicia potestas* in AD 71 – colleague with his father in all of Vespasian's consulships.



Eruption of Vesuvius – AD 79

“In Campania remarkable and frightful occurrences took place; for a great fire suddenly flared up at the very end of the summer... fearful droughts and sudden and violent earthquakes occurred, so that the whole plain round about seethed and the summits leaped into the air... and first huge stones were hurled aloft, rising as high as the very summits, then came a great quantity of fire and endless smoke, so that the whole atmosphere was obscured and the sun was entirely hidden, as if eclipsed... it buried two entire cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii...” – **Dio Cassius 66.21-23.**



“My uncle [Pliny the Elder] was stationed at Misenum, in active command of the fleet. On 24 August, in the early afternoon, my mother drew his attention to a cloud of unusual size and appearance... He changed his plans, and what he had begun in a spirit of inquiry he completed as a hero. He gave orders for the warships to be launched and went on board himself with the intention of bringing help to many more people besides Rectina, for this lovely stretch of coast was thickly populated...He stood leaning on two slaves and then suddenly collapsed, I imagine because the dense fumes choked his breathing by blocking his windpipe which was constitutionally weak and narrow and often inflamed. When daylight returned on the 26th—two days after the last day he had seen—his body was found intact and uninjured, still fully clothed and looking more like sleep than death.” — **Pliny the Younger *Letters* 6.16** (Pliny to Cornelius Tacitus).



“Eruption of Vesuvius – Pierre-Jacques Volaire, 1774.

Colosseum and Baths of Titus

“Most that he did was not characterized by anything noteworthy, but in dedicating the hunting-theatre and the baths that bear his name he produced many remarkable spectacles. There was a battle between cranes and also between four elephants; animals both tame and wild were slain to the number of nine thousand; and women (not those of any prominence, however) took part in despatching them.” – **Dio Cassius 66.25.1.**

“...when the Amphitheatre was dedicated [AD 80] along with the baths hastily constructed next to it, Titus gave phenomenally lavish and expensive games... which on one day alone included 5,000 wild animals of all kinds.” – **Suetonius *Divus Titus* 7.3.**

Death of Titus

- Titus dies on 13th of September AD 81.

“Titus died at the age of 42... It was the ides of September [13th] and he had reigned two years, two months and twenty days. When news spread, the common people went into mourning as if they had suffered a personal loss...” - **Suetonius *Divus Titus* 11.**

Plot of Domitian?

“The familiar account is that he was put out of the way by his brother, for Domitian had previously plotted against him; but some writers state that he died a natural death. The tradition is that, while he was still breathing and possibly had a chance of recovery, Domitian, in order to hasten his end, placed him in a chest packed with a quantity of snow, pretending that the disease required, perhaps, that a chill be administered.”
Dio Cassius 66.26.

Titus' character

“[Titus] had such a winning manner – be it inborn, cultivated later, or granted to him by fortune – that he became an object of universal love and adoration. Strangely this happened only after his accession: both as a private citizen and later as his father's colleague, Titus had been not only unpopular but venomously loathed.” – **Suetonius *Divus Titus* 1.**

Useful Reading

- Potter, D. (2009) *Rome in the Ancient World* (London: Thames & Hudson) pages 198-203.
- Goodman, M. (2007) *Rome & Jerusalem: The Class of Ancient Civilisations* (London: Penguin Books) - read pages 445-511.