

## **Roman Beliefs**

### **1. Explain how Roman Religion was a layered religion?**

The underpinnings of Roman Religion were the old rural gods of Italy such as Terminus, whose sacred rock was kept in the inner shrine (cella) of the Temple of Jupiter Maximus. Gods like Jupiter, Minerva and Juno wore the surface veneer of the sleek sophisticated Greek gods and mythology. As Rome expanded it included many eastern religions, the so called Mystery religions, like the worship of Isis, Mithras and Christianity which promised a happy life after death.

### **2. Did Rome always welcome foreign religions?**

No. At times some religions like that of Bacchus and even Isis for a time were banned.

### **3. What was Mithraism?**

Mithraism was a mystery religion (a religion with secret rites) imported from Persia and was very popular with soldiers and businessmen. It exalted loyalty and fraternity with Mithras as the spirit of light, truth and justice and antagonist of evil.

### **4. Explain Roman views on Christianity and Judaism?**

Romans often had trouble distinguishing the two religions since they both came from Judaea and were both monotheistic. Some emperors like Augustus had a tolerant attitude toward them and others like Tiberius and Claudius expelled the Jews and the Christians along with them because of Jewish attempts at converting others to Judaism. Nero used the Christians as scapegoats after the great fire in 64 A.D. because they were easy targets, disliked as foreigners and practitioners of secret mysteries.

### **5. What philosophical beliefs were popular at Rome?**

Stoicism was particularly popular among the upper classes.

### **6. Who was the leading Stoic philosopher at the time of our readings?**

Epictetus, a former Greek slave who was owned by Epaphroditus, the emperor's freedman.

**7. What were some of the prominent beliefs of the Stoics?**

1. disapproved of one man rule
2. disapproved of inherited power
3. believed that a ruler should try to benefit all the citizens, not just a few.

**8. What are “feriae”?**

Religious festivals.

**9. What was the “Matronalia”?**

A festival when husbands gave presents to their wives.

**10. What happened during the “Vestalia”?**

Asses which turned millstones to grind grain were garlanded and hung with loaves of bread.



**\*\*\*This is not all you need to know. Re-read the reading. \*\*\***