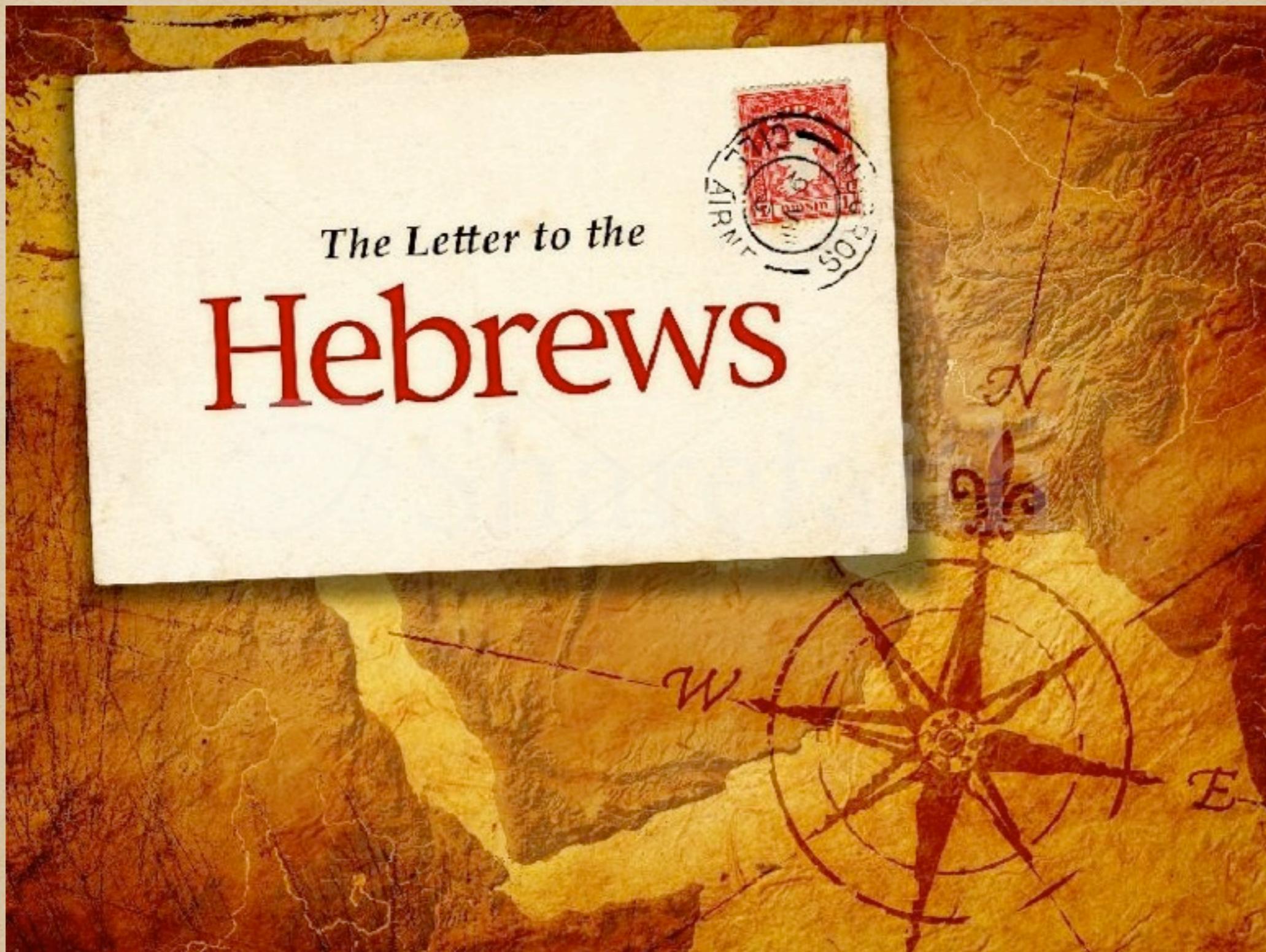


The Letter to the
Hebrews

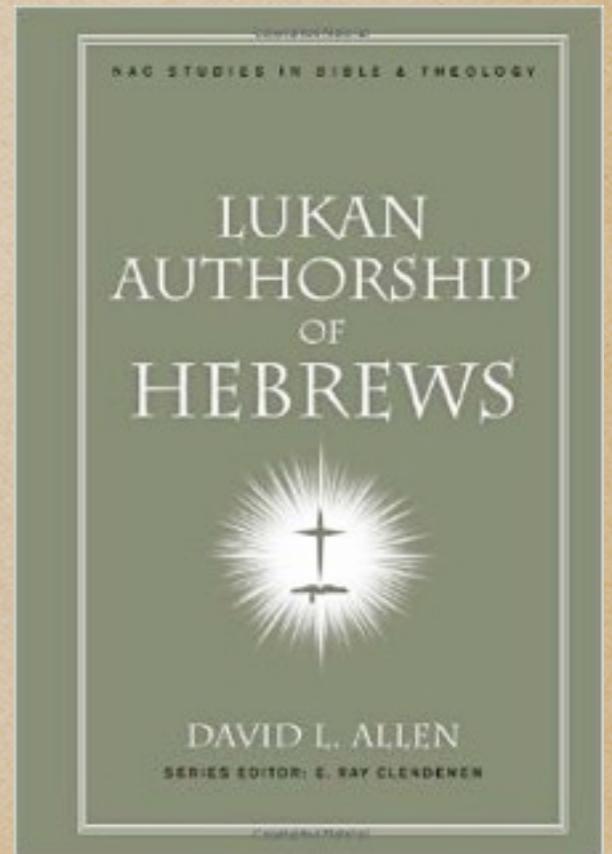


Author of the Book

- The book is anonymous, but some have speculated about the author.
- Eastern Christianity viewed Paul as the author, but the language does not resemble Paul's other letters.
- A more likely candidate is Luke because the Greek phrases fit his other writings.

Author of the Book

- It is likely that the unnamed disciple on the road to Emmaus is Luke, who is also the author of Hebrews.
- He may also be providing an overview of what Jesus taught the disciples after His resurrection.



Jesus is Better
than the
Prophets and Angels

Hebrews 1:1-9

Better than the Prophets

- The writer of Hebrews opens without a greeting but moves immediately to the superiority of Jesus.
- First, Jesus is superior to the prophets.
- The readers moved from Judaism to Christianity, and thus had a great respect for the prophets.

Better than the Prophets

- How is Jesus better than the prophets?
- In previous times, God used the prophets to reveal specific messages.
- The prophets only had a partial revelation from God.
- Jesus is the full revelation of God and a perfect representation of God.

Creation (2)

- Jesus is heir of all things, and God worked through His Son to create.
- Notice the connection to “the last days.”
- God spoke through the prophets, but now in these last days He has spoken directly to us through His Son.

Creation (2)

- Jesus is heir of all things - Jesus has control of all creation (Hebrews 2:8).
- God worked through His Son to create both space and time (Colossians 1:16).
- The Son is the intermediate agent in creation.

Father (3)

- Jesus is the radiance of God's glory - He reflects God's spotless purity.
- Jesus is an exact imprint of the Father - He is an exact representation, He has the divine substance of the Father.
- This is a bold proclamation of the deity of Jesus Christ.

Father (3)

- Jesus sustain the world - it won't fall into utter chaos because He is in charge.
- Jesus provided for the purification for sins - this is His supreme grace for us.
- After this, Jesus ascended the throne.
- He has a place of honor at God's right hand: He is Lord.

Better than the Angels

- Jesus is now compared to the angels.
- Jesus is better because of His title. He is the Son of God.
- To prove this, we read the first of seven Old Testament quotations.
- God never called the angels “my Son” as we read in Psalm 2:7.

Better than the Angels

- The second quotation comes from 2 Samuel 7:14 that concerns David.
- Later prophets looked for David to have a greater Son: the Messiah (Micah 5:2).
- New Testament writers proclaimed Jesus as the descendent of David who fulfilled this verse (Romans 1:3).

Better than the Angels

- Hebrews 1:6 - “Let all God’s angels worship Him.” They did so at His birth.
- Hebrews 1:7 - what do angels do?
Angels are compared to natural elements like wind and fire.
- They do God’s bidding and are His messengers.

Better than the Angels

- Hebrews 1:8-9 - Jesus is better because of His important role (Psalm 45:6-7).
- First, the Son has a throne and is a ruler.
- Second, His throne will last forever.
Angels are not eternal: were created.
- Third, the Son loves righteousness.

Jesus is Better
than Creation and
All Things

Hebrews 1:10-14

Better than Creation

- Hebrews 1:10-12 - this is the longest of the seven quotations and comes from Psalm 102:25-27.
- Jesus will completely change the created order (2 Peter 3:11-13).
- The world (like a coat) will wear out until we have a New Heaven and Earth.

Better than Creation

- Hebrews 1:13 - the seventh quotation comes from Psalm 110:1.
- The ascension of Jesus placed him at the Father's right hand.
- Jesus even claimed that this verse applied to him (Mark 12:36).
- Some day enemies will be a footstool.

Better than Creation

- Hebrews 1:14 - angels have a servant role which is much different from the authority of God's Son.
- The Old Testament teaches that angels will deliver believers (Psalm 34:7).
- The New Testament records angelic rescues (Acts 12:7-10).

Conclusion

- Jesus is better!
- Jesus has won the victory!

Decline of a Nation

Introduction

- George Santayana - “those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it.”
- George Hegel - “What experience and history teach us is this: that people and government never have learned anything from history or acted on principles deduced from it.”

Cycle of Nations

- From bondage to spiritual faith
- From spiritual faith to great courage
- From great courage to liberty
- From liberty to abundance
- From abundance to selfishness

Cycle of Nations

- From selfishness to complacency
- From complacency to apathy
- From apathy to moral decay
- From moral decay to dependence
- From dependence to bondage

Malcolm Muggeridge

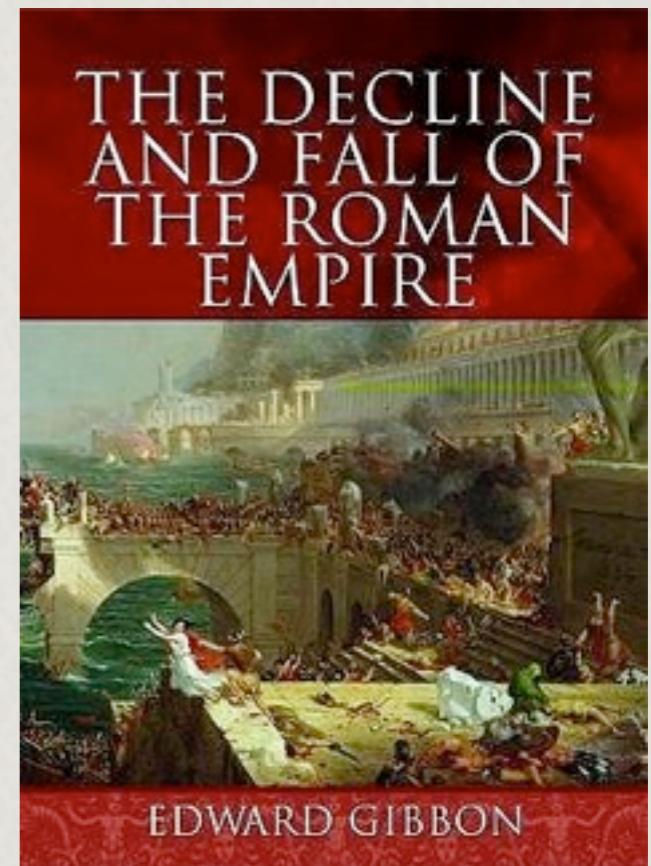
I conclude that civilizations, like every other human creation, wax and wane. By the nature of the case there can never be a lasting civilization anymore than there can be a lasting spring or lasting happiness in an individual life or a lasting stability in a society. It's in the nature of man and of all that he constructs to perish, and it must ever be so. The world is full of the debris of past civilizations and others are known to have existed which have not left any debris behind them but have just disappeared.

Malcolm Muggeridge

...whatever their ideology may be, from the Garden of Eden onwards such dreams of lasting felicity have cropped up and no doubt always will. But the realization is impossible for the simple reason that a fallen creature like man though capable of conceiving perfection and aspiring after it, is in himself and in his works forever imperfect. Thus he is fated to exist in the no man's land between the perfection he can conceive and the imperfection that characterizes his own nature and everything he does.

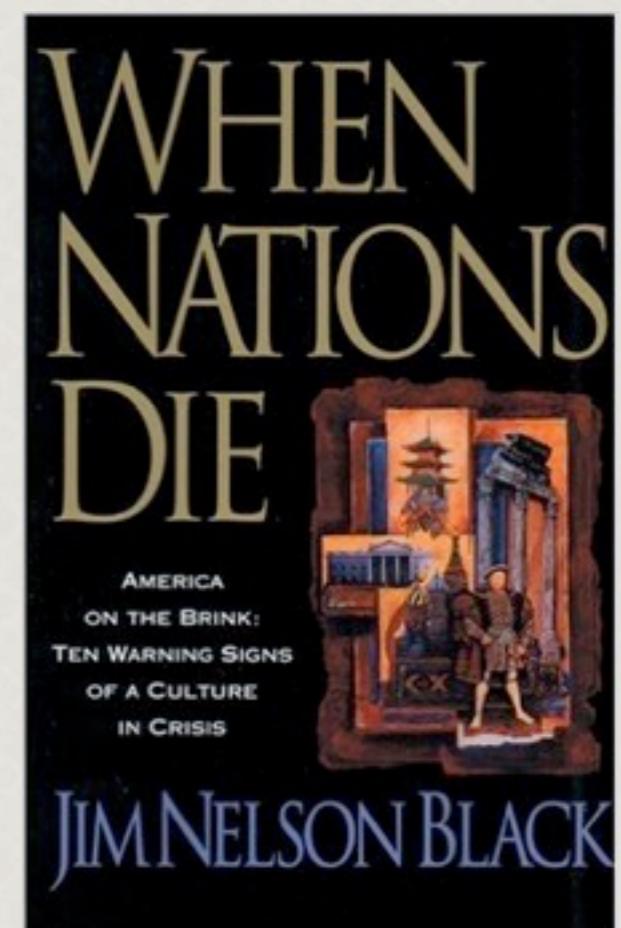
Moral Decay

- *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.*
- Edward Gibbon observed that the leaders of the Roman empire gave into the vices of strangers, morals collapsed, laws became oppressive, and the abuse of power made the nation vulnerable to the barbarians.



Moral Decay

- Jim Nelson Black finds ten warning signs from other nations that apply to America today.
- British historian Catherine Edwards demonstrated that our current examples of immorality are not a modern phenomenon.
- Contraception, abortion, and exposure - ways to prevent childbirth.



Moral Decay

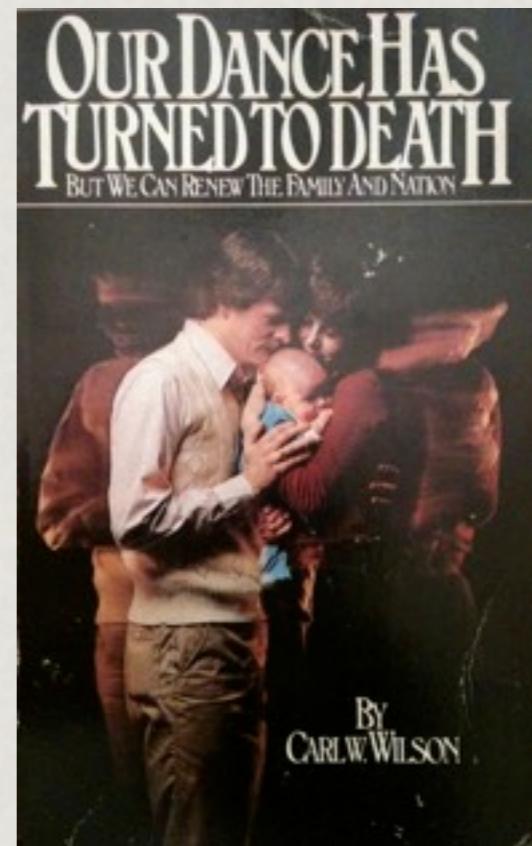
- Life became cheap in the latter days of the Roman Empire. Burdensome regulation and taxes made manufacturing and trade unprofitable. Families were locked into hereditary trades and vocations allowing little if any vocational choice.
- Eventually, children were seen as a needless burden. Abortion and infanticide became commonplace. In some cases, children were sold into slavery.

Moral Decay

- In Greece, the music of the young people became wild and coarse.
- Popular entertainment was brutal and vulgar.
- Promiscuity, homosexuality, and drunkenness became a daily part of life.
- All moral and social restraints were lost leading to greater decadence.

Decline of the Family

- As families go, so goes a nation.
- This has been the main premise of thinkers from British historian J. D. Unwin to Russian sociologist Pitirim Sorokin who have studied civilizations that have collapsed.
- The pattern is found in this book.



Decline of the Family

- First stage - men ceased to lead their families in worship. Spiritual and moral development became secondary. Their view of God became naturalistic, mathematical, and mechanical.
- Second stage - men neglected care of their wives and children to pursue material wealth, political and military power. Material values began to dominate thought, and man began to exalt his own role as an individual.

Decline of the Family

- Third stage - involved a change in men's sexual values. Men who were preoccupied with business or war either neglected their wives sexually or became involved with lower-class women or with homosexuality.
- Fourth stage - The role of women at home and with children lost value and status. Women were neglected and their roles devalued.

Decline of the Family

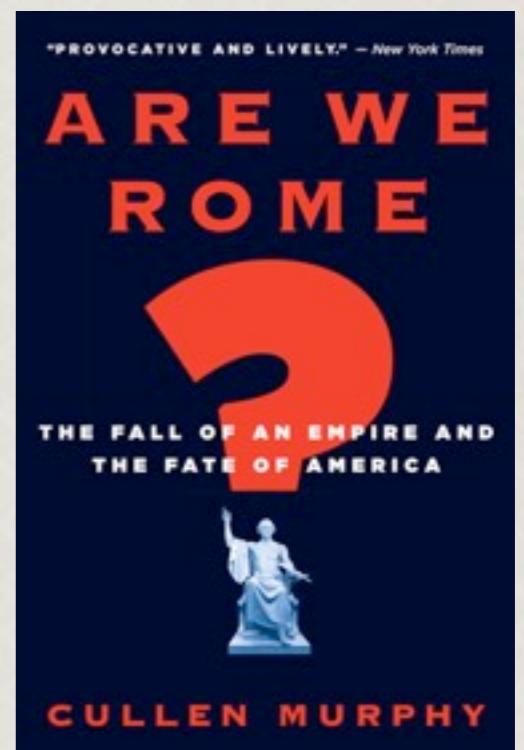
- Fifth stage - husbands and wives competed against each other for money, home leadership, and the affection of their children. Many marriages ended in separation and divorce.
- Sixth stage - selfish individualism grew and carried over into society, fragmenting it into smaller and smaller group loyalties. The decrease in the birthrate produced an older population that had less ability to defend itself.

Decline of the Family

- Fifth stage - unbelief in God became more complete, parental authority diminished, and ethical and moral principles disappeared, affecting the economy and government.
- Although this is an ancient pattern of decline found in Greece and Rome, it is relevant today. Families are the foundation of a nation. When the family crumbles, the nation falls because nations are built upon family units.

Are We Rome?

- There are major similarities and differences between the Roman Empire and America.
- Size, political dominance, global influence.
- Differ in technology, government, slavery, democracy, entrepreneurship.
- Many parallels between the two.



Spiritual Decline

- In Romans 1, Paul describes the stages of spiritual decline.
- The first stage is when people turn from God to idolatry.
- Although God has revealed Himself in nature to all men so that they are without excuse, they nevertheless worship the creation instead of the Creator.

Spiritual Decline

- This is worship of the creation is idolatry.
- A further example of this is a general lack of thankfulness. Although they were prospered by God, they were ungrateful.
- They no longer honor God, so their foolish hearts become darkened. In professing to be wise, they have become fools.

Spiritual Decline

- The second stage is when men and women exchange their natural use of sex for unnatural uses.
- Here Paul says those four sobering words, “God gave them over.”
- In a society where lust-driven sensuality and sexual perversion dominate, God gives them over to their degrading passions and unnatural desires.

Spiritual Decline

- The third stage is anarchy.
- Once a society has rejected God's revelation, it is on its own. Moral and social anarchy is the natural result.
- At this point God has given the sinners over to a depraved mind and so they do things which are not proper.

Spiritual Decline

- The final stage is judgment.
- God's judgment rightly falls upon those who practice idolatry and immorality.
- Certainly an eternal judgment awaits those who are guilty, but a social judgment occurs when God gives a nation over to its sinful practices.

