

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview
Short Film: “Are We Rome Yet?” (20-25 Minutes)
(TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY)

Goal

In this short film (8:45) students see similarities between the Ancient Roman Empire and America.

Instructions

1. Play this short film for students:

https://youtu.be/LmWUp5XV_1k

2. Ask students for their overall thoughts.

3. **Notes:**

- Empires like Ancient Rome’s are marked by debt, expansive wars, arrogant rulers who rule via executive orders, and ignoring their constitutions.
- Rome devalued its currency to spend more, down to having only 2 percent silver in coins (the government wouldn’t even accept its own coins as tax payments!). **NOTE:** America’s coins minted since 1965 have **zero** percent silver.
- Ancient Rome had no high taxes at first (looting neighbors), but increased them to pay for conquering armies (death/inheritance taxes, tariffs, income taxes).
- Romans began abandoning their property rather than having to pay the property taxes, then Rome’s government made this illegal!
- Part of why Rome fell was the pushback/wars involving conquered provinces protesting high taxes.
- Tax revolts ended up killing 80,000 Roman “tax farmers” (tax collectors).
- The top income tax in America went from 7 percent (when the income tax was added in 1913) to 70 percent in 10 years.
- During the American Revolution, Americans paid 2 percent in taxes, at the same time the British paid 20 percent (to pay for empire).
- The current rate of all taxes combined in America is roughly 40 percent.

4. Tell students: “Here are several marks of an out-of-control government and/or empire—write these down:

- A dictatorship
- High taxes
- Endless wars
- Rule by whims instead of law

Now, in [pairs/groups], come up with brief strategies either by (a) honest government officials or (b) the people to reduce/remove those four characteristics.” Give students 5-7 minutes, then discuss as a class their ideas.