Chapter 7: The Empires of Persia

Chapter Outline

I. The rise and fall of the Persian Empires
   A. The Achaemenid Empire
      1. Medes and Persians migrated from central Asia to Persia before 1000 B.C.E.
      2. Cyrus the Achaemenid (the Shepherd) (reigned 558-530 B.C.E.)
      3. Cyrus's son, Cambyses (reigned 530-522 B.C.E.), conquered Egypt in 525
      4. Darius (reigned 521-486 B.C.E.); largest extent of empire; population thirty-five million
      5. Achaemenid administration
   B. Decline and fall of the Achaemenid Empire
      1. Commonwealth: law, justice, administration led to political stability and public works
      2. Xerxes (reigned 486-465 B.C.E.)
      3. The Persian Wars (500-479 B.C.E.)
      4. Alexander of Macedon invaded Persia in 334 B.C.E.
   C. The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid Empires
      1. Seleucus inherited most of Achaemenid when Alexander died
      2. The Parthians, based in Iran, extend to Mesopotamia
      3. The Sasanids, from Persia, toppled Parthians; ruled 224-651 C.E.

II. Imperial society and economy
   A. Social development in classical Persia
      1. Nomadic society; importance of family and clan relationships
      2. Imperial bureaucrats
      3. Free classes were bulk of Persian society
      4. Large class of slaves who were prisoners of war and debtors
   B. Economic foundations of classical Persia
      1. Agriculture was the economic foundation
      2. Trade from India to Egypt

III. Religions of salvation in classical Persian society
   A. Zarathustra and his faith
      1. Zoroastrianism
      2. Zoroastrian teachings
      3. Popularity of Zoroastrianism grows from sixth century B.C.E.
   B. Religions of salvation in a cosmopolitan society
      1. Suffering of Zoroastrian community during Alexander's invasion
      2. Officially sponsored Zoroastrianism during the Sasanid empire
      3. The Zoroastrians' difficulties
      4. Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism, Christianity, and later, Islam
      5. Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, Judaism also in Persia