

regions were under the leadership of men of Greek or Macedonian background, and the same general type of culture was dominant throughout. Although these Hellenistic kingdoms were politically independent of one another, the following two centuries can be properly considered as the period of the Grecian (or Hellenistic) empire, since Greek language, culture and attitudes characterized the rulers of almost the whole area of the former Persian empire.

During this time the city of Rome gained control over most of Italy and came into conflict with the great power of Carthage in north Africa. A long struggle eradicated Carthage and established Rome as a great power. Then Rome began to extend its power in an easterly direction and gradually brought many sections of Alexander's empire under its control. During the two centuries in which it was extending its power over the areas controlled by the descendants of Alexander's generals, the Roman republic must have appeared to the conquered peoples as the greatest and most destructive force of all, well fitting the iron portion of the image described in Daniel 2 that "breaks and smashes everything" (v. 40), and the description in Daniel 7 of "a fourth beast -- terrifying and frightening and very powerful. It had large iron teeth; it crushed and devoured its victims and trampled underfoot whatever was left" (v. 7). This empire continued to be an effective force much longer than any of the three previous ones. About four centuries after the birth of Christ the Roman empire began to disintegrate. By A.D. 400 various Germanic groups were beginning to march across it, pillaging its cities and establishing themselves in practical independence within its borders. Some historians consider the Roman empire as having ended in A.D. 476, since in that year a German conqueror abolished the name of Roman emperor, as far as the west was concerned. Yet many of the forms of Roman government were preserved. Roman ideas and culture continued to exert tremendous influence throughout Europe (and America) during