

Lecture 10: *The Third-Century Crisis and the Making of Martyrdom*

1. Religious Diversity in the Roman Empire
 - A. Religion and Spirituality: The spread and appeal of Christianity
 - B. The Example of Dura Europos
 - Religion sealed in the sands

 2. The Crisis of the Third Century
 - A. Barbarian Pressures at the Limes: Sassanians and Germans
 - B. Military and Fiscal Crisis
 - C. Military Emperors

 3. Imperial Response – or The Empire Strikes Back
 - A. Christian Persecution
 - B. The Meaning of Christian Martyrdom
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Case Study: The Example of Dura-Europos: Christianity in context

Roman settlement period, ca. 113-256 AD – a frontier town
Falls to the Sassanians Empire in 256 AD
Archeological excavation in 1920s-30s

Emblematic of religious diversity in the later Roman Empire:
Standing structures:

- Mithraeum, Mithras (Iranian god popular among Roman soldiers)
 - Synagogue

 - Christian House-Church and Baptistry
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TERMS & DATES:

Roman Religion = *religio* = the duty, practices and obligations owed to the Gods; must be distinguished from spirituality = Indeed, for most Romans religion and spirituality were different matters altogether.

Crisis of the Third Century begins under the Severan Emperors: Septimius Severus (r. 193-211) and Caracalla (r. 211-217) = made the Fiscal Crisis of the third century much much worse through taxation and inflation.

One result of the crisis was that the Roman army came to control the office of emperor. The armies threw up 25 emperors in 47 years during the 3rd century.