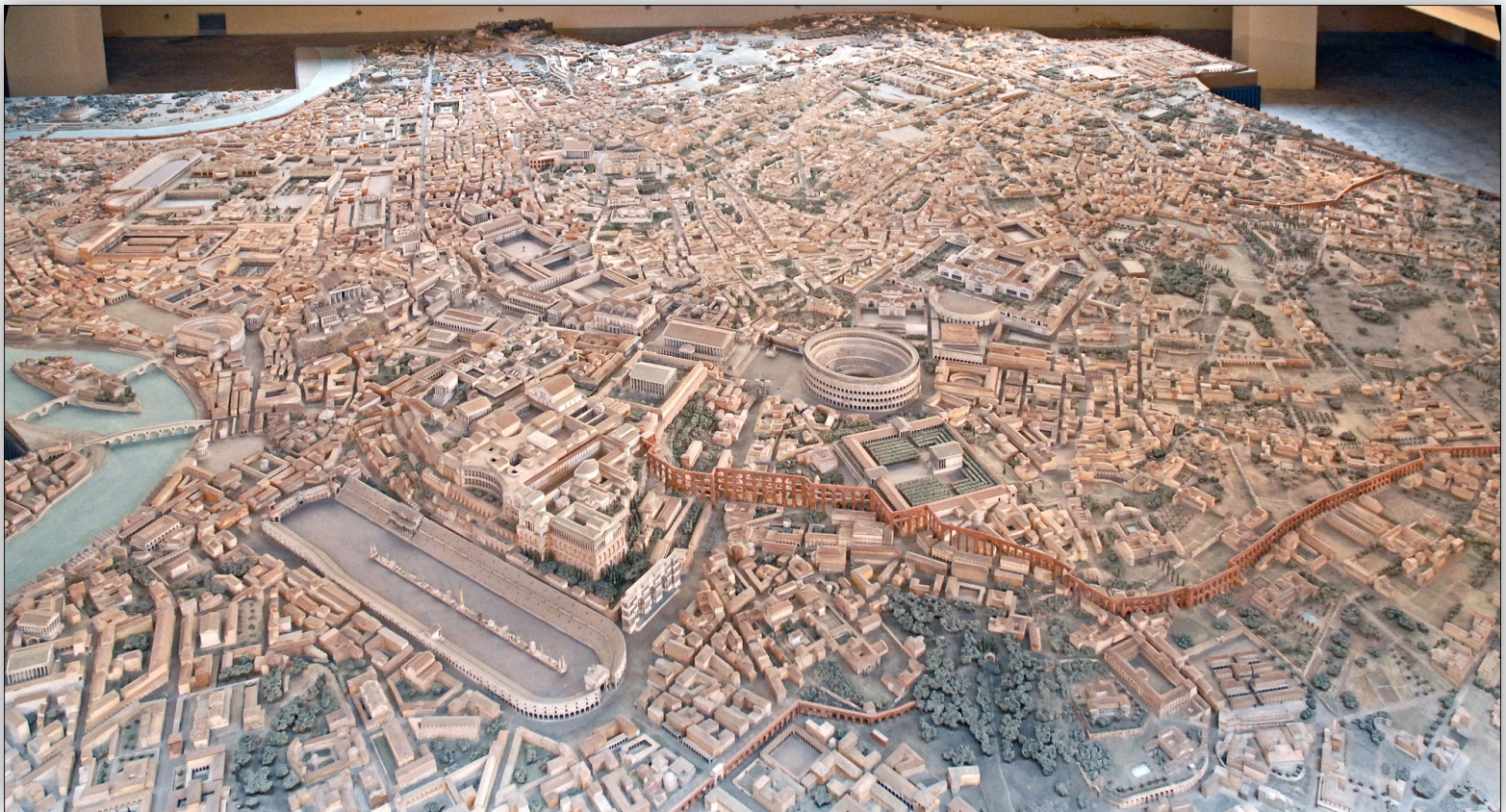


Background to Rome

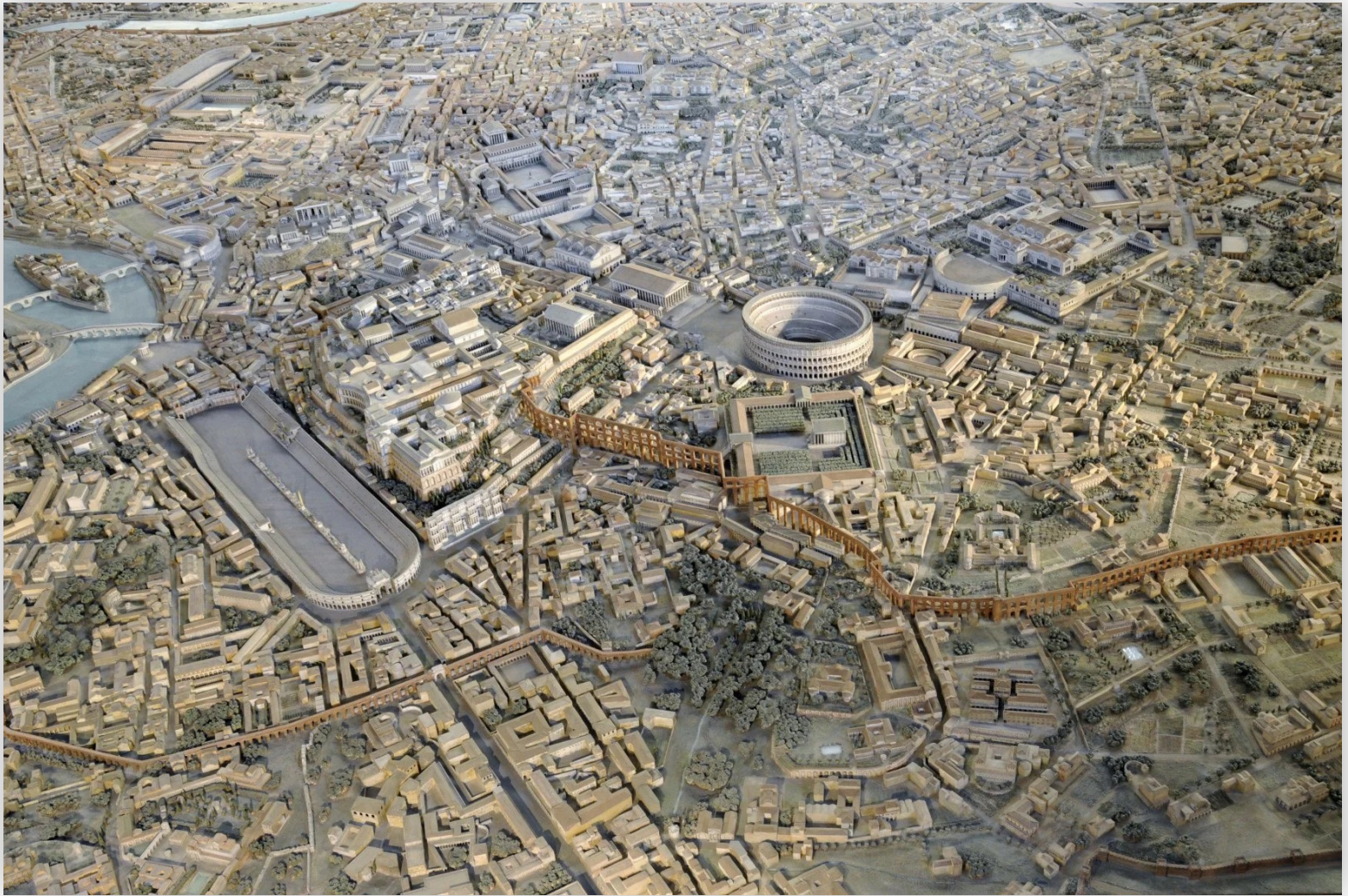


When Paul wrote Romans, he had never been there, but he had determined that Rome would be his next stop after he visited Jerusalem for the holidays.

Rome lay approximately 1400 miles to the west of Jerusalem. It was the heart of the empire and the largest city of it. It was a cosmopolitan city, with people, food, trade goods, and travelers from all over the empire crammed into crowded streets. It boasted a population of over a 1 million people, and it was the center of Roman power.



Here's a little more of closeup.



In the middle of this photo you can see the Colosseum. It was built in the 70's, about 15 years after Paul wrote Romans. It was originally called the Flavian Amphitheater after the family name of the emperor who built it.

The large oval structure to the left is the Circus Maximus. It was the first public stadium built in ancient Rome. It hosted chariot races and other public events. It measured 621 m in length and 118 m in width and could accommodate over 150,000 spectators!

Here's more of a street level view to give you a feel of size and crowding.



Though the gospel had made it to Rome and there was a church there (actually several house churches as becomes clear by the end of the letter - listen to the backstory audio for more on that), the church had no direct connection to the apostles and Paul wanted to visit them to more firmly establish them (Romans 1:1-15; 15:17-29). Paul's dream was that the church in this massive city could be a launching pad for ministry further west to Spain.

It didn't initially work out that way for Paul. A few years after he wrote the letter, he did arrive in Rome, but not as he hoped. He arrived as a prisoner awaiting for he case to be heard before Emperor Nero.

The book of Acts ends with Paul under house arrest for two years, still waiting for his case to be heard. Church tradition says that Paul was released after these two years and did eventually travel to Spain. He was later arrested again and this time held in prison (not house arrest) while waiting to be executed.

Below is a photo of the Mamertine Prison, said to be where Paul and Peter both were held until their execution in Rome.



QUESTA È LA COLONNA DOVE STANCO
LEGATI I SS APOSTOLI PIETRO E PAOLO
CONVERTIRNO I SS MARTIRI PROCCSO
MARTINIANO CUSTODI DELLE CARCERI E
ALTRI XVII ALLA FEDI DI CRISTO QVALI
BATTEZZORNO COL ACCORDI QUESTO
ACATVRITA MIRACOLOSAMENTE