1. **The Rise and Fall of the Persian Empires**
   1. The Achaemenid Empire
      1. The Medes and the Persians
         1. Migrated from central Asia to Persia before 1000 B.C.E.
         2. Indo-European speakers, sharing cultural traits with the Aryans
         3. Challenged the Assyrian and Babylonian empires
      2. Cyrus the Achaemenid (reigned 558-530 B.C.E.)
         1. A tough, wily leader, military strategist
         2. Became the king of the Persian tribes in 558 B.C.E.
         3. Brought all of Iran under his control by 548 B.C.E.
         4. Established a vast empire stretching from India to borders of Egypt
         5. Died in 530 B.C.E.
      3. Cyrus's son, Cambyses (re. 530-522 B.C.E.), conquered Egypt in 525
      4. Darius (re. 521-486 B.C.E.)
         1. A young kinsman of Cyrus
         2. Built the largest empire in world history so far
         3. Ruled more than 70 ethnic groups
         4. New capital at Persepolis, 520 B.C.E.
      5. Achaemenid administration
         1. Divided the empire into twenty-three satrapies
         2. Satraps (Persian governors) were appointed by the central government
         3. Local officials were from the local peoples themselves
         4. Satraps' power was checked by military officers and "imperial spies"
         5. Replaced irregular tribute payments with formal taxes
         6. Standardization of coins and laws
         7. Communication systems: Persian Royal Road and postal stations
   2. Decline and Fall of the Achaemenid Empire
      1. Xerxes (reigned 486-465 B.C.E.)
         1. Retreated from the policy of cultural toleration
         2. Caused ill will and rebellions among the peoples in Mesopotamia and Egypt
      2. The Persian Wars (500-479 B.C.E.)
         1. The rebellion of Ionian Greeks
         2. Aid from peninsular Greece
         3. Persian rulers failed to put down the rebellion
      3. Alexander of Macedon
         1. Invaded Persia in 334 B.C.E.
         2. The battle of Gaugamela, the end of Achaemenid empire, 331 B.C.E.
         3. Alexander burned the city of Persepolis
   3. The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanid Empires
      1. The Seleucids
         1. Seleucus inherited most of the former Achaemenid empire
         2. The Seleucids retained the Achaemenid system of administration
         3. Met opposition from native Persians
         4. Lost control over northern India and Iran
      2. The Parthians
         1. Based in Iran, extended to wealthy Mesopotamia
         2. Retained some traditions of nomadic people
         3. Formidable power of Parthian heavy cavalry because of alfalfa diet of horses
         4. Rebellion against Seleucid overlords in 238 B.C.E.
         5. Mithradates I established a mighty empire through conquests
      3. Parthian government
         1. Portrayed themselves as restorers of the Persian tradition
         2. Followed the example of the Achaemenids in administration
         3. Clan leaders as satraps: potential threats for central government
         4. The pressure from the expanding Roman empire, 1st century C.E.
         5. Internal rebellion brought it down in the early 3rd century C.E.
      4. The Sasanids
         1. From Persia, claimed direct descent from the Achaemenids
         2. Toppled the Parthians in 224 C.E.
         3. Capital at Ctesiphon
         4. Merchants brought in various crops from India and China
         5. The empire stood against the Kushan empire in the east and the Roman and Byzantine empires in the west, 3rd century C.E.
         6. In 651 C.E., the empire was incorporated into the expanding Islamic empire
2. **Imperial Society and Economy**
   1. Social Development in Classical Persia
      1. Nomadic character of early Persian society
         1. Similar to the Aryans in India
         2. Importance of family and clan relationships
      2. Imperial bureaucrats
         1. Imperial administration called for educated bureaucrats
         2. Shared power and influence with warriors and clan leaders
      3. Free classes
         1. In the city: artisans, craftsmen, merchants, civil servants
         2. In the countryside: peasants - building underground canals (*qanat*)
         3. Slaves in both cities and countryside
   2. Economic Foundations of Classical Persia
      1. Agriculture was the economic foundation
         1. Main crops: Barley and wheat
         2. Supplemental crops: peas, lentils, mustard, garlic, onions, cucumber
         3. Large agricultural surplus
      2. Trade
         1. Commercial zone from India to Egypt
         2. Political stability promoted growth of trade
         3. Standardized coins, good trade routes
         4. Specialization of production in different regions
   3. Religions of Salvation in Classical Persian Society
      1. Zarathustra and his faith
         1. Earliest Persian religion resembled that of the Aryans
         2. Zoroastrianism, emerged from the teachings of Zarathustra
      2. The Gathas
         1. Zoroastrian teachings, transmitted orally, many perished
         2. Preserved later in writing, by *magi*
         3. Compilation of the holy scriptures, Avesta, under Sasanid dynasty
         4. Zarathustra's own writing survived, known as *Gathas*
      3. Zoroastrian teachings
         1. Ahura Mazda as a supreme deity, with 6 lesser deities
         2. Cosmic conflict between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu
         3. Heavenly paradise and hellish realm as reward and punishment
         4. The material world as a blessing
         5. Moral formula: good words, good thoughts, good deeds
      4. Popularity of Zoroastrianism
         1. Attracted Persian aristocrats and ruling elites
         2. Darius regarded Ahura Mazda as supreme God
         3. The faith was most popular in Iran
         4. Sizable followings in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Egypt, and other regions
   4. 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
         1. Islamic conquerors toppled the Sasanid empire, seventh century C.E.
         2. Some Zoroastrians fled to India
         3. The remaining Zoroastrians converted to Islam
         4. A few thousand faithful Zoroastrians still exist in modern day Iran
      4. Other faiths: Buddhism, Christianity, and Manichaeism
      5. Influence of Zoroastrians
         1. Influence on Jewish religion: belief in future reward and punishment
         2. Influence on Christianity: concepts of heaven and hell
         3. The above concepts of Judaism and Christianity later influenced Islam