

Rise and Fall of The Roman Empire



Following the death of Julius Caesar, his grand-nephew, Augustus, became Emperor of Rome. Despite the fact that Caesar was the first Emperor of Rome, Augustus was the one who truly turned Rome into an empire. He united all the Roman provinces and granted Roman citizenship to the people in them. Augustus only focused on lands already controlled by Rome, and the Empire remained the same size, until Claudius expanded the Empire's borders into England.

At first, succession of the throne remained in one ^fFamily with the emperorship passing to relatives, adopted or otherwise, but following the death of the corrupt emperor, Nero, there was no obvious heir. In the year after Nero's death, three emperors came and went. The struggle ended when Vespian became emperor and started construction on the colosseum. Vespian and his sons, known as the Flavian Dynasty, gave way to the Nerva Dynasty without any transient emperors between them.

Emperor Hadrian of the Nerva Dynasty altered and refined the government to better suit a huge empire by adding new government offices, tweaking policies, and making sure that laws were fair and applied the same to everyone. However, as the central government grew stronger, remote cities and lands forgot how to govern themselves without much involvement from Rome.

Despite Hadrian's reforms, Rome still had massive inner decay. Rich farm owners were producing the cheapest food and goods with slave labor. Unable to compete with these ~~with~~ ^{where} massive farms, small farm owners would leave their farms and move to the cities where they would become part of an ever-growing poor class, living off food provided by the government. Rome's worst falling was the lack of an official decree on the succession of emperors. When the last of the Nerva Dynasty, Commodus, was assassinated Rome entered a century of constant bloodshed over the throne and Empire.

From one of Rome's faraway territories came an army led by General Severus. This army marched into Rome and Severus became emperor. Being born in Africa and not in Rome, Severus didn't know much about Roman traditions and filled government offices with less educated soldiers who were also from faraway lands.

This peace was to be short lived, for once Severus's sons died the chaotic fighting over Rome resumed. Calm was restored for five years in the form of Emperor Aurelian, but with his death came another nine years of fighting and bloodshed.

Though it may seem improbable, the era after the century of bloodshed was an even darker time for The Roman Empire. The fighting ended with Diocletian becoming Emperor of Rome. Diocletian made even the insane Caligula and egotistical Nero look like humble emperors. He demanded everyone bow down to him and worship him like a god. To make his power absolute he striped the Senate of any remaining power, divided the Empire into two halves, and moved the capital to Nicomedia, in the east side. With the capital and Emperor now in the east side, the west side including Rome began to weaken. As if that wasn't enough, he decreed that the rich pay what taxes poor couldn't pay and dictated that everyone had to ask permission to leave home or change jobs. These new laws were the start of the fall of The Roman Empire and the Dark Ages.

Diocletian would be the last emperor of both the east and west halves of Rome until Constantine the Great. Constantine moved the capital again, this time to Byzantium, still in the east. However, where Constantine truly stood out was in the fact that he was the first Christian Roman Emperor and he officially changed the Roman religion to Christianity.