

Constantine the great



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Constantine the Great was one of the strongest and most important rulers in the Byzantine and Roman Empire. He made big changes and accomplishments that made the empire greater, and more powerful such as maintaining the full size of the Roman Empire, successfully defeating his enemies and competitors, and staying in charge. Constantine made huge improvements such as outlawing Pagan sacrifice, confiscating temple treasuries, and curbing Christian heresies. -(Phillip Sherrard, 1986, Pg. 10-14)

Constantine was born on twenty seventh of February ca. 272 in Naissus (Serbia). Constantine was the son of Constantius and his first wife Helen, born with the Latin Roman name Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinu. Constantine's mother promoted Christianity, made a pilgrimage to the holy land where she collected relics, identified sacred places and built churches. His father ruled as a Roman Emperor from 293 to 306 and was the founder of the Constantinian Dynasty. Constantine, feeling neglected after when his father divorced his mother, distinguished himself as a soldier and won the affection of the army. He excelled in military exercises, was modest, and well informed. Constantine later joined his father, who ruled in the west. Before Constantinus died he proclaimed his son his successor (306). Constantine the Great married Minervina who either died or divorced before 307 and Fausta who was Maximian's daughter. He had six children, one of them from Minervana but the rest from Fausta named Crispus, Constantina, Helena, Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans. Constantine the Great had many excellent qualities. He was brave, active, untiring, and ruled with firmness and fairness. As Constantine got older, he adopted the luxury and pomp which was introduced from the East. He wore false hair of different colors

perfectly arranged, a diadem of costly gems, and a robe of silk that contained flowers made out of gold and more precious stones. He reigned thirty years, the longest period since Augustus. Since he was converted into Christianity later in his life, he was not baptized until a little time before his death. He died on May twenty second, A. D. 337 on the way to campaign against the Persians. Constantine was buried in Constantinople. -(James Carroll, 2001, Pg. 346-372)

Constantine's most important achievement and greatest project was his "new Rome" (Constantinople, present day Istanbul). Constantine moved the capital from Rome to the Greek city of Byzantium. He enlarged and enriched the city at enormous expense. Massive walls and stately buildings were built, and a large chain was placed in the water to protect their new capital. Constantine the Great provided the city with a forum, a hippodrome, a circus of great size, baths, and pleasure-grounds, to make it somewhat similar to Rome. Schools and theatres, aqueducts, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and a great number of magnificent private houses were added later on. Constantine issued special commemorative coins in 330 to honor his new city that he created. After creating this city, he began to form a new constitution for his empire. He established complete despotism, all the power being in his hands. He outstandingly improved this beautiful city, and made it equal to Rome in power and influence. Not only did Constantine make his capital, Constantinople beautiful with art and architecture but he also filled Trier with imperial buildings and Rome with baths, and the great arch of Constantine near the Colosseum. -(Phillip Sherrard, 1986, Pg. 34-41)

Constantine's second biggest and most important achievement was being the first Christian Roman Emperor. After winning many battles, it was said that during the campaign against Maxentius, Constantine saw the miraculous cross in the heavens. Short after becoming a Christian he made Christianity the established religion of the state. Constantine began the process of making Christianity the religious foundation of Europe. -(James Carroll, 2001, Pg. 58-67)

Thirdly, Constantine not only earned his honorific "the great" title from Christian historians but also because of his military achievements and victories. Besides getting the empire together under one emperor, Constantine also won major victories over the Franks and Alamanni in 306-8 and Franks again in 313-14. Constantine the Great always believed in changing plans last minute and he would rearrange things at the battle field. Constantine had a magnificent and trained army and was trained well with strategies since he was an officer in the Roman army in 272. His army stayed loyal to him at all times during a battle or when there were problems with ruling. -(J. Lowden, 1998, Pg. 12-19)

In conclusion Constantine the Great had a huge impact on both the Roman and the Byzantine Empire and was a great leader during his rule. He left behind many great architecture and art. In my opinion he was probably the most important historical figure in my civilization because he brought Christianity to Byzantines and Christianity was a big part of this empire since the art and architecture was based upon it. He never gave up or showed any types of weakness during battle or other times. He was a strong leader with

a strong mind who greatly changed my civilization and many around it in good ways. t

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