

Roman Emperors – 360AD to 450 AD

The End of the Empire in the West

JULIAN II (360-363) known as *Julian the Apostate* because he tried to reintroduce pagan gods or *Julian the Philosopher* because of his literary prowess. He was the nephew of Constantine the Great and appointed Caesar by Constantius II. When his troops mutinied, they proclaimed Julian Emperor, a title he gained more legitimately with the death of Constantius in 361. However after only two year he was killed fighting the Persians.

JOVIAN (363-4) was Commander of the Imperial Guard under Julian and was proclaimed Emperor by his troops. He made peace with the Persians but while on his way back to Constantinople he was accidentally asphyxiated by a brazier left in his tent overnight.

VALENTINIAN I (364-375) was a high ranking general under the previous Emperors who was proclaimed Emperor by his troops. Shortly afterwards he made his younger brother Valens co-emperor. Valens was made ruler of the Eastern Empire while Valentinian took charge in the West. There was serious trouble in Britain which was overrun by barbarians in 367 and when order had been restored (by Count Theodosius) two years later, there was more trouble on the Rhine frontier. While interviewing barbarian chiefs, Valentinian had an apoplectic fit at their insolence and died soon afterwards.

VALENS (364-378) was appointed Emperor in the East by his elder brother Valentinian. He spent much of his reign fighting against the Persians and defending the Danube frontier. In 376, the Visigoths seeking to escape the advance of the warlike Huns, got permission to cross the Danube and settle in Roman territory. Harshly treated by the Romans, they revolted and laid waste the countryside. Valens advanced against them to restore order but his army was almost annihilated and he was killed in a battle near Hadrianopolis.

PROCOPIUS (365-6) led a rebellion against Valens in Constantinople while Valens was occupied in the east. Troops loyal to Valens defeated him and put him to death.

GRATIAN (367-383) was the son of Valentinian I who was made joint Emperor at the age of 7 in 367. After his father's death he succeeded as joint Emperor in the West and in 378 he became Emperor in the east also, following the death of Valens. He left the East with its problems to his General Theodosius (making him Emperor there) while he faced the rebellion of Magnus Maximus who had been proclaimed Emperor in Britain and went on to invade Gaul. On his way to deal with this threat, Gratian was deserted by his own troops and tried to flee but was caught and murdered.

VALENTINIAN II (375-392), younger son of Valentinian I was nominally Emperor in the West with Gratian, a title he succeeded to fully after Gratian's death. However he was only left with Italy and, when Magnus Maximus invaded Italy in 387, he fled to Theodosius for help in regaining his inheritance. Once this was achieved he began to rule in the West but fell under the control of one of his generals, the former barbarian Arbogastes.

Valentinian was strangled in 392 probably on the orders of Arbogastes.

THEODOSIUS I (379-395) was the son of Count Theodosius who had restored order in Britain in the late 360s. An able general he was able to restore Roman control in the east but then had to move west to confront Magnus Maximus who he defeated in 388. Following the death of Valentinian II, he next had to defeat Arbogastes' nominee Eugenius.

Theodosius was now effectively sole emperor but only few months later he died in Milan

MAGNUS MAXIMUS (383-388) was proclaimed Emperor by troops under his command in Britain who were dissatisfied with the rule of Gratian. Maximus promptly invaded Gaul and soon had the allegiance of Britain, Gaul and his native Spain. Scaring off Gratian, who was murdered while trying to flee, he went on to invade Italy causing the young Valentinian II to flee too. However he was no match for Theodosius who marched to Valentinian's support, routed his army and executed Maximus. FLAVIUS VICTOR (387-388) was the son of Magnus Maximus who was made joint Emperor with his father and left in Gaul when Maximus invaded Italy. After Maximus' death, he too was captured and executed.

EUGENIUS (392-394), a well-bred teacher with no military or leadership experience, was proclaimed Emperor in the West after the death of Valentinian by the latter's general, Arbogastes who was effectively the real ruler. He was defeated and executed by Theodosius.

ARCADIUS (383-408) was the elder son of Theodosius and was made Emperor in the East following his father's death. He was a weak ruler who fell under the influence of a succession of favourites.

HONORIUS (393-423), the younger son of Theodosius, was made Emperor in the West after his father's death. Honorius was unfortunate to be ruler in the west at the time of the great barbarian invasions. In 406, an army of Vandals invaded and plundered Gaul. The following year, the army of Britain rebelled and their leader Constantine III invaded Gaul and sided with the barbarians. In 408, the Goths invaded Italy from the south and Honorius retreated to Ravenna while the Goths besieged Rome twice and then sacked the Eternal City in 410. The same year, Honorius wrote to the cities of Britain telling them to look to their own defence in future (a letter that probably never reached them). Fortunately Honorius' general Constantius managed to stem the flood for the time being and drive the Goths out of Italy. In recognition of his services, Constantius was elevated to be joint Emperor as CONSTANTIUS III (421) but died a few months later.

CONSTANTINE III (407-411) was a common soldier (with the right name!) who was proclaimed Emperor by the legions in Britain. He immediately invaded Gaul where he joined forces with the barbarians and invaded Spain. In 409, Spain was invaded by Vandals and he was forced out. Eventually he was captured by Constantius and taken to Italy where he was executed.

CONSTANS (408-411) was the son of Constantine II who was made joint Emperor with his father and led the invasion of Spain. He was eventually cornered in Gaul and executed.

Maximus (409-11) briefly ruled in Spain but was pardoned by Honorius allowed to retire.

PRISCUS ATTALUS (409-10 and 414-415) was a noble Roman who became the puppet ruler of the barbarian leader Alaric the Goth. Alaric's successor deposed him and he was handed over to Honorius who exiled him.

JOVINUS (411-415) A noble-born Gaul who was proclaimed Emperor and later deposed and executed by barbarian leaders, as was his son...

SEBASTIANUS (412-3)

JOHANNES (423-425) was the secretary of Honorius and his chosen successor but Theodosius II (Emperor in the East) refused to recognise him and send an army to depose him.

THEODOSIUS II (402-450), son of Arcadius was made co-Emperor in the East at the age of 9 months. He was still only 7 when his father died and had to have a series of regents, the last of whom was his sister Aelia Pulcheria who took over at the age of 15 in 414 AD and remained a close advisor even when he was old enough to rule alone. His main achievement was a new legal code for the Eastern Empire which remained peaceful for most of his long reign.

VALENTINIAN III (425-455) was the son of Constantius III who quarrelled with Honorius and fled to Constantinople before returning to Italy with Theodosius II to depose Johannes. He then ruled as Emperor in the West but over a much diminished Empire, finally losing control of Africa. He was assassinated following a plot by one of his senators. Following this, in the troubled Western Empire there was a succession of short-lived and largely ineffective Emperors who tackled the barbarians with little hope of success. The Western Empire had effectively ceased to exist.