

# WORLD HISTORY-1

## MODULE IV-DECLINE OF THE ANCIENT WORLD



**TOPIC-DECLINE OF ROMAN EMPIRE-  
CHANGING SOCIALSCAPES-IMPACT OF  
CHRISTIANITY**

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# DECLINE OF ROMAN EMPIRE



- The period from 27 BCE to the main part of the third century CE is called the early empire.
- Augustus established the Roman Empire in 27 BCE. He was called the 'Principate' or the 'leading citizen'.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> century in Roman history is known as the period of crisis
- It was by this time, the rulers had identified that the city of Rome was no more an effective and safe capital for the vast empire and they tried various cities as new administrative capitals
- Apart from the invasion of the Germanic tribes(Vandals,Ostrogoths and Theodoric etc),Roman Empire was also ravaged by Barbarian tribes from Asia, called the Huns
- By the 5<sup>th</sup> cy AD, the rule of the Germanic Barbarians was established in Italy
- The Barbarian conquests of the Roman Empire had far reaching results



- The Germanic tribes who conquered and settled in the Roman Empire did not destroy the Roman culture
- 1. In an empire, the government is the despotism of one man or a few men over a vast people who have no liberty. The common people had no freedom of person or freedom of opinion. So, most people welcomed the barbarian invasion as a means of redemption from imperial tyranny
- 2. In the later days of Roman Empire, most of the emperors were inefficient and Pleasure-seeking monarchs. They never cared for their subjects
- 3. Another important cause of the decline of the Roman Empire was the Transformation in the composition of the Roman army. At first the army was composed of patriotic men, fought for the country. But in course of time they were replaced by professional soldiers who joined the army not to protect homes, but for their wages and for their loot
- They plundered the cities of the empire more enthusiastically than they fought their enemies



- 4. Germanic invaders were physically and morally superior to the native Romans
- 5. Another cause of the downfall of the Roman Empire is said to be the terrible decline in the population of Rome
- Several causes such as abortion, infanticide, avoidance or postponement of marriage, war, internal revolution etc.
- **ECONOMIC CAUSES:** The dependence of the Rome on Provincial grains, the collapse of the slaves supply, deterioration of transport and the disorganization of trade, the excess of Italian imports over exports and the consequent drain of precious metals from the Empire, the destructive war between rich and poor, the crushing expenses of an expanding bureaucracy
- **RELIGIOUS CAUSES;** Christianity helped the decline of the empire



- Rome had tangled with Germanic tribes for centuries, but by the 300s “barbarian” groups like the Goths had encroached beyond the Empire’s borders.
- The Romans weathered a Germanic uprising in the late fourth century, but in 410 the Visigoth King Alaric successfully sacked the city of Rome.
- The Empire spent the next several decades under constant threat before “the Eternal City” was raided again in 455, this time by the Vandals.



- According to the great historian Edward Gibbon, Christianity was the chief cause of Rome's fall.
- He says that Christianity through its ideal of ascetism and prayer and its ethics of non-resistance and peace disrupted the unity of the empire
- The Edict of Milan legalized Christianity in 313, and it later became the state religion in 380.



- Finally, in 476, the Germanic leader Odoacer staged a revolt and deposed the Emperor Romulus Augustus.
- From then on, no Roman emperor would ever again rule from a post in Italy, leading many to cite 476 as the year the Western Empire suffered its deathblow.
- **THE RISE OF THE EASTERN EMPIRE:** when the Emperor Diocletian divided the Empire into two halves—the Western Empire seated in the city of Milan, and the Eastern Empire in Byzantium, later known as Constantinople.
- The division made the empire more easily governable in the short term, but over time the two halves drifted apart
- The Western political structure would finally disintegrate in the fifth century, but the Eastern Empire endured in some form for another thousand years before being overwhelmed by the Ottoman Empire in the 1400s.

# CHANGING SOCIALSCAPES



- Decline in Trade in the West; Urban to RURAL SOCIETY
- The decline of the Roman empire in Europe contributed for the decline of international trade that had existed between the Roman empire in the west and Asia(India,China)
- The indifference shown to the growth of trade by the later emperors,riots,revolts,civil wars and above all external invasions were the primary causes for the decline of trade, both inside and outside the Ancient Roman Empire
- The Emperors lost the control of their frontiers and could not maintain the roads and bridges properly which eventually leading to the breakdown of trade
- As a result of the war with the Sasanid empire of Persia, the Romans lost many important trading centres





- The rulers in the third century preferred debasement of coinage rather than raising tax
- Despite laws passed to prevent migration from Urban centres to rural areas, the Urban centres gradually became depopulated and many Roman cities were abandoned and specialized traders went to the rural areas to practice subsistence agriculture
- Oppressive and arbitrary taxation led to severe net decrease in trade
- Individuals were forced to work at their given place of employment and remain in the same occupation
- Large land owners, to avoid taxation, began to organize small communities around them