

## Constantinople



The city of Rome fell in 476 A.D., but the Roman Empire itself didn't really end until 1,000 years later. How did this happen?

In 330 A.D., the emperor Constantine founded the city of Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, Turkey) as the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. Constantinople was to be a "second Rome," and the empire governed from there was later known as the Byzantine Empire, or just Byzantium.

1. When was the city of Constantinople founded and what was it supposed to be?

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While Rome was an open city, Constantinople was built with a system of thick, reinforced walls, which made the city almost impossible to conquer. Constantine also reformed the political, economic and military structures of the empire, streamlining systems to reduce waste and prevent the infighting over royal succession that had plagued Rome for several centuries.

2. How was Constantinople designed in contrast to Rome?

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3. What type of reforms did Constantine undertake in his new city?

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The *Mese* (Middle Street) was the main thoroughfare of Constantinople. The *Mese* was 82 feet wide and lined with shops. The *Mese* was the route followed by imperial processions through the city. The victorious emperor started by entering the city through the Golden Gate and following the *Mese* to the Great Palace, while jubilant crowds lined along the street to greet him and the imperial army back home.

4. What was the Mese? Why was it important to an emperor?

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The strengthened economy allowed rulers to pay off potential invaders and also support a large army. As a matter of fact, during the first millennium (1000 years) of the Common Era, the Byzantine economy was one of the strongest in the world. Although it went through its share of crisis and upheavals, the Byzantine Empire was able to survive until the Ottoman Turks finally captured Constantinople in 1453.

5. Why was the economy important to the survival of Constantinople? How strong was the economy?

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