

The Split of the Roman Empire



Because of the well-built Roman roads, the success of the military, and the leadership of Rome's more able emperors and generals, the Roman Empire grew to enormous proportions. It was huge! It covered most of Europe, most of North Africa, and some of Asia. That created problems.

It was getting difficult to manage the empire effectively.

Word went out from Rome, but the provinces did not always do what they were told. Rome seemed very far away to the people in the outlying provinces (it had grown large).

The provinces were pitting a great financial strain on Rome.

Taxes and trade goods from the provinces were pouring into Rome, but supplies to support the provinces were also pouring out. Money was needed to build new roads, to support the legionnaires (military), and to enable more growth. Rome needed more growth because they needed new regions to tax, to refill Rome's treasury.

When the old emperor died, the army selected General Diocletian to be the new emperor of Rome. One of the first things Emperor Diocletian was to put price controls in place to help stop inflation. He created a law that stated if you charged more than the price limit, you could be killed. The punishment for breaking any of his laws was quite severe.

The Solution:

After some thought, Emperor Diocletian decided the only thing to do with Rome was to split the empire in half. That way, it would be easier to manage. This created two Roman Empires – the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire. Each side had a ruler in charge of it. But the ruler who was in charge of Rome was the senior ruler.

The Western Roman Empire (Europe / North Africa) included the city of Rome.

The Eastern Roman Empire (Turkey / parts of Asia) included the city of Byzantium.

Rather than rule Rome, Diocletian chose to rule the Eastern Roman Empire. He placed a good friend in charge of Rome. Before he left town, Emperor Diocletian moved a great deal of Rome's money over to the Eastern Roman Empire. He left Rome forever.

