

Eight Reasons Why Rome Fell

By History.com, adapted by Newsela staff on 07.17.17

Word Count **493**

Level **570L**



The painting "Destruction" from a series called "The Course of Empire" by painter Thomas Cole in 1836. The scene is perhaps suggested by the Vandals sacking Rome in A.D. 455.

The Western Roman Empire was the world's greatest superpower for 500 years. In 476 A.D., it suddenly fell.

How could such a great empire fall apart so quickly? Below are eight key reasons.

1. Invasions by other tribes

Rome had long battled the Goths and other Germanic tribes. Over time, the Goths slowly pushed forward. In 410 they attacked the city of Rome.

In 455, Rome was attacked again. Finally, in 476, the Germanic leader Odoacer overthrew the Roman Emperor. From then on, no Roman emperor ruled from Italy.

2. Economic troubles and slave labor shortage

Even before 476, Rome had started to crumble. Constant wars had used up much of the empire's money.

The empire was also having trouble finding enough workers.

Rome used slaves to do much of its farming and work. Most were captured when the Romans took over new lands.

Over time the empire stopped growing. Slaves then became much harder to find.

Soon, Rome was unable to grow enough food. It was unable to make enough of the goods it needed.

3. The rise of the Eastern Empire

In the late 200s, the Empire was split into two halves.

One was the Eastern Empire. It grew stronger and lasted for a thousand more years. The Eastern Roman Empire is also called the Byzantine Empire.

The Western Empire was the other half of the empire. It grew weaker. Soon the Germanic tribes were mostly attacking the West.

4. Expansion and costs of war

The Roman Empire was huge. That made it very hard to protect. Rome had to defend far-away lands from attackers. A lot of money was spent on war.

5. Political instability

Rome's government was also in bad shape. Emperors came and went very quickly. Many were killed.

Other leaders only cared about money.

6. The arrival of the Huns and loss of land

In the late 300s, the Huns arrived in northern Europe. They pushed the Goths into the Roman Empire. The Romans treated the Goths very badly.

The Goths finally rose up. In 378 they killed the Roman Emperor Valens. In 410 the Goths attacked Rome. Soon, other Germanic tribes began taking over Roman lands.

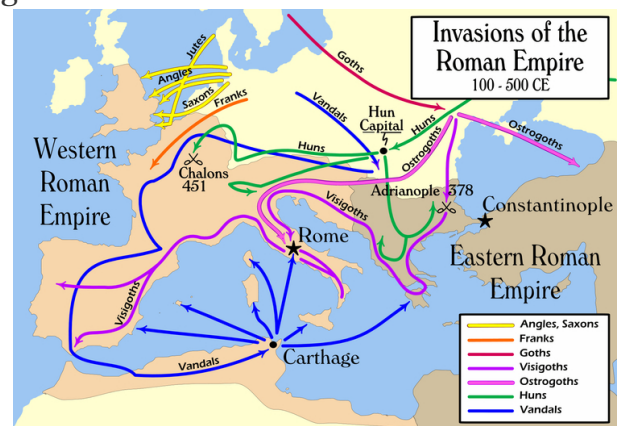
7. The rise of Christianity

Christianity also helped cause the empire's fall.

Christianity became the empire's official religion in 380. Popes and other church leaders became powerful. They made the government even more divided.

8. Weakening of the Roman army

Rome's army was the mightiest in the world for hundreds of years. But in later years that began to change. It became harder and harder to find Romans willing to join the army. Emperors began hiring non-Romans instead.



Soon the Roman army was filled with Goths and other non-Romans. These men were fierce warriors. But they could not be trusted. Indeed, many of the Goths who attacked Rome were once in the Roman army.