The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
Political Instability

- After Marcus Aurelius Rome is ruled by weak rulers
  - After 180 C.E. = Century of political turmoil
  - 26 different emperors over 50 year span
  - Only one died of natural causes
Social and Economic Problems

• Exhausted Farmland
  – Overuse of farmland lessens agricultural production

• Raising Taxes
  – More troops needed to protect borders meant citizens were taxed more
Diocletian (284-305 C.E.)

• Came to power with goal of reviving Empire
• Increased bureaucracy with hope of making empire run more smoothly
  – Decided to co-rule with Maximian
• Diocletian became Emperor of the East and Maximian ruled the Western Emperor
Impact of Diocletian’s Rule

• Allowed Rome to exist for another 100 years
• Only emperor to ever willingly give up throne
Constantine 306-337 C.E.

- Started out as General in Western Empire
  - After civil war controlled Britain, Roman Germania, Gaul and Spain
- Believed himself to be rightful heir to Western Empire
  - Had to defeat Maxentius, Ruler of Italy to legitimize rule
Famous For….

• Battle of Milivian Bridge (312 C.E.)
  – Constantine’s plan, destroy Milivian Bridge and build pontoon bridge in it’s place
  – Before battle had a vision of a Christian cross
    • “In this sign, you will conquer”
  – Forced Maxentius’ army over bridge (Which collapsed) and slaughtered or captured rest of troops
Famous For....

• Council of Nicea (325 C.E.)
  – Formally makes Christianity the religion of the Empire
Impacts of Constantine

- After Civil War reunifies Empire
- Mass introduction of Christianity shaped post-classical Europe
  - Officially allowed Christianity within Empire and allowed it to spread
- Established New Capital of Constantinople
  - Shifted center of power away from Rome

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Christians</th>
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<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>1.1 Million</td>
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<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>6.3 Million</td>
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<tr>
<td>350</td>
<td>34 Million</td>
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External Troubles

• Facing attacks by “Barbarians”
  – Visigoths in 378 and 410 (Rome Sacked)

• With Western Rome Getting Weaker, more areas sought independence
  – Germany, Britain, Spain, France, all broke away
Scourge of God

• Attila the Hun
  – 441 C.E. Attila begins attacks on Eastern Empire
  – Easily wins many victories and makes his way towards Rome
  – Plundered and destroyed everything in his path
  – Met inglorious death
The Fall of Rome

- Rome left weakened by Attila
- 476 C.E.
  - Germans led by Odoacer conquer Rome