



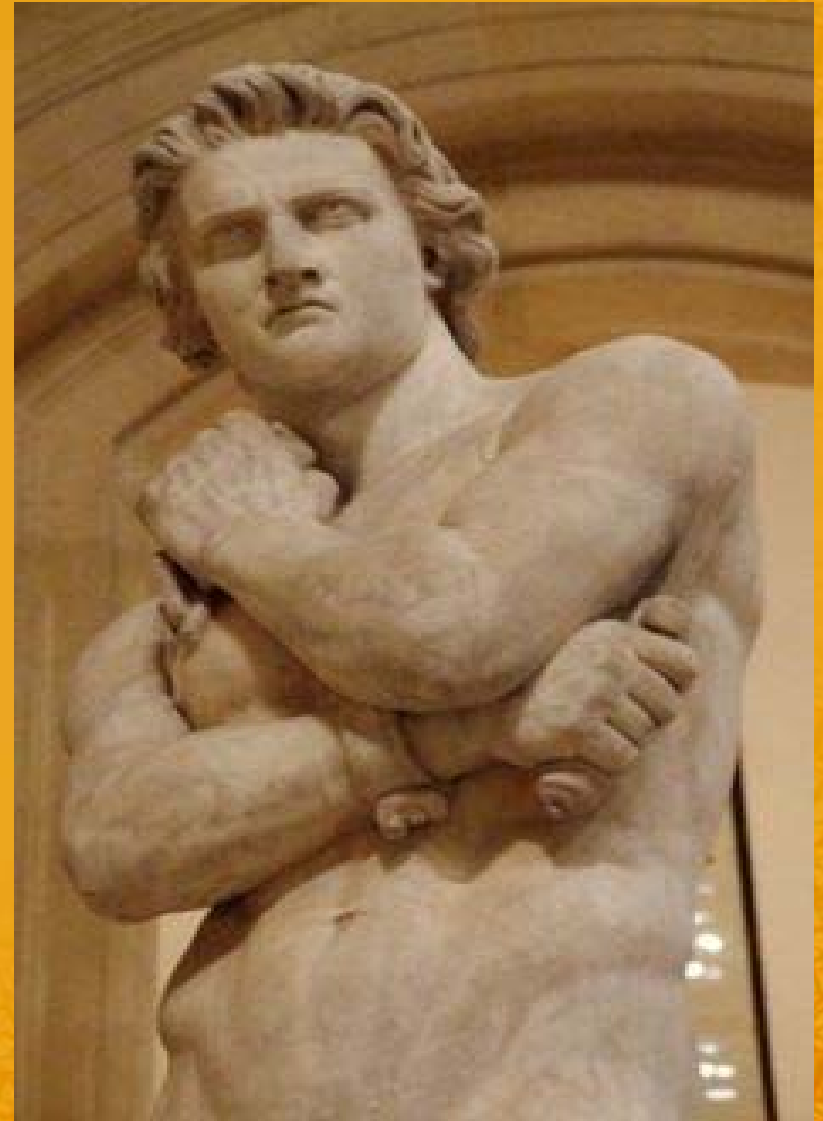
T 18 Fall of the Western Roman Empire and the Rise of Christianity

Decline and Fall

- Long process – Division of the empire into two parts by emperor **Diocletian** in 285 CE
- New capital in **Byzantium** – renamed **Constantinople** (now **Istanbul**) by emperor **Constantine** in 330 CE
- Conquest of Rome in 476 CE by various Germanic tribes – fall of the Western empire
- Eastern (**Byzantine**) Roman Empire continued for another millennium
- 1453 – occupation of Constantinople by the Ottoman Empire – end of the Byzantine Empire

Causes of Decline and Fall

Slavery: source of constant tension; frequent mutinies — rebellion under Spartacus; destroyed initiative and encouraged parasitic lifestyle; obstructed development of science and technology



Spartacus

Other Causes

- **Decreasing land fertility** and deforestation
- **Diminishing Revenues**
- **Decreasing population**
- Frequent **conflicts** due to the absence of any clear law of succession
- **Barbarian Invasions:** Huns, Goths, Visigoths, Vandals, Teutons and others

Other Causes (cont.)

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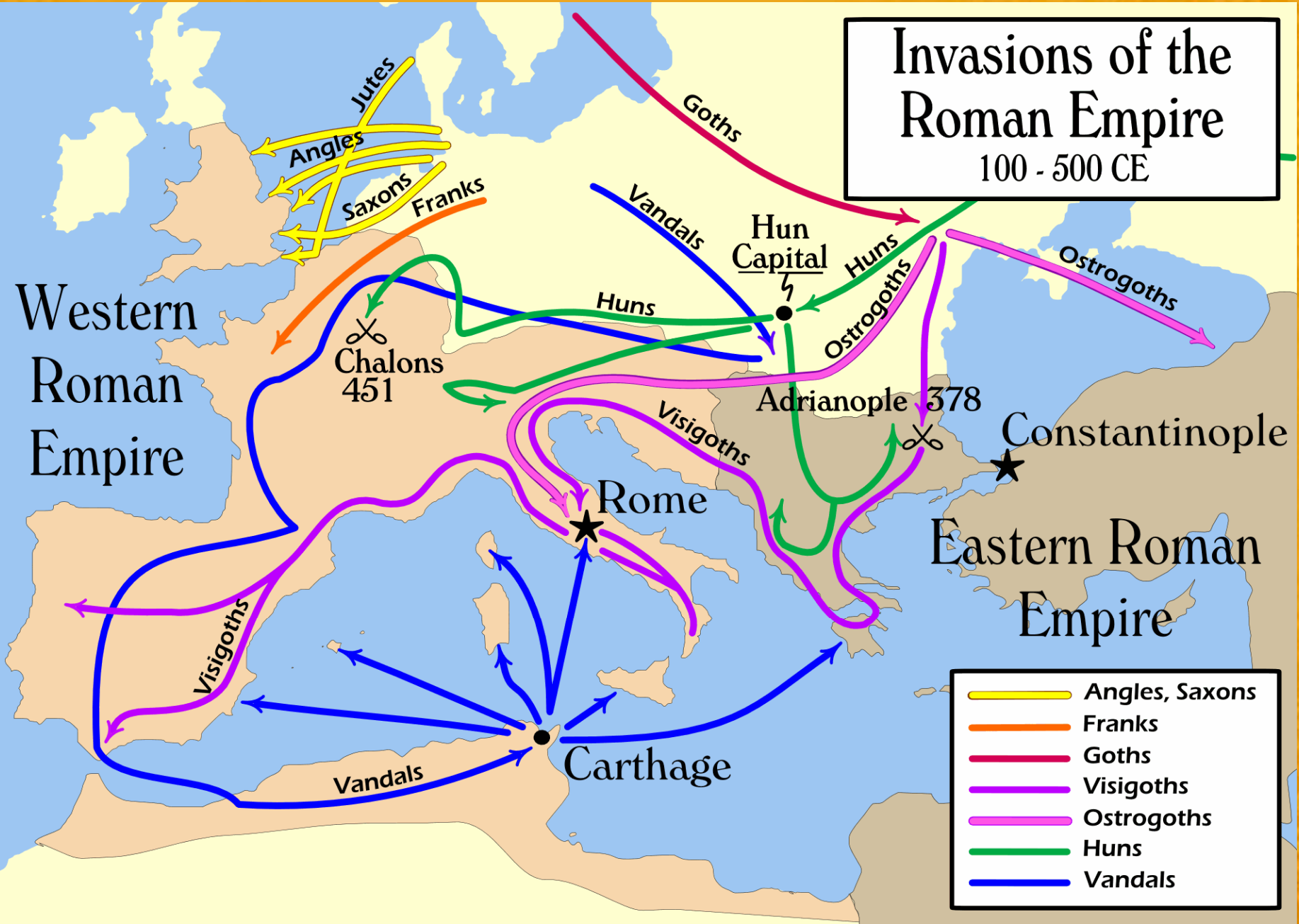
Sack of Rome by the Visigoths

Invasions of the Roman Empire

100 - 500 CE

Western Roman Empire

Eastern Roman Empire



Religion

- Absorbed many of the gods and **cults** of the conquered nations
- Polytheism (**Paganism**): **Jupiter** — supreme god; **Mars** - god of war; **Venus**: Goddess of love
- Paganism co-existed with **Christianity** for a long time

Roman Gods



Jupiter, King of The Gods



Venus, Goddess of Love

Roman Gods



Diana, Goddess of The Moon and Hunting



Minerva, Goddess of Wisdom

Legacy

- **Roman Law** – foundation of modern legal system
- Transmission of **Greek traditions** to the Western world – Roman history as the beginning of Western history
- Lasting influence of Roman **architecture and sculpture**
- Influence on Christianity – **Roman Catholicism**

Beginning of Christianity

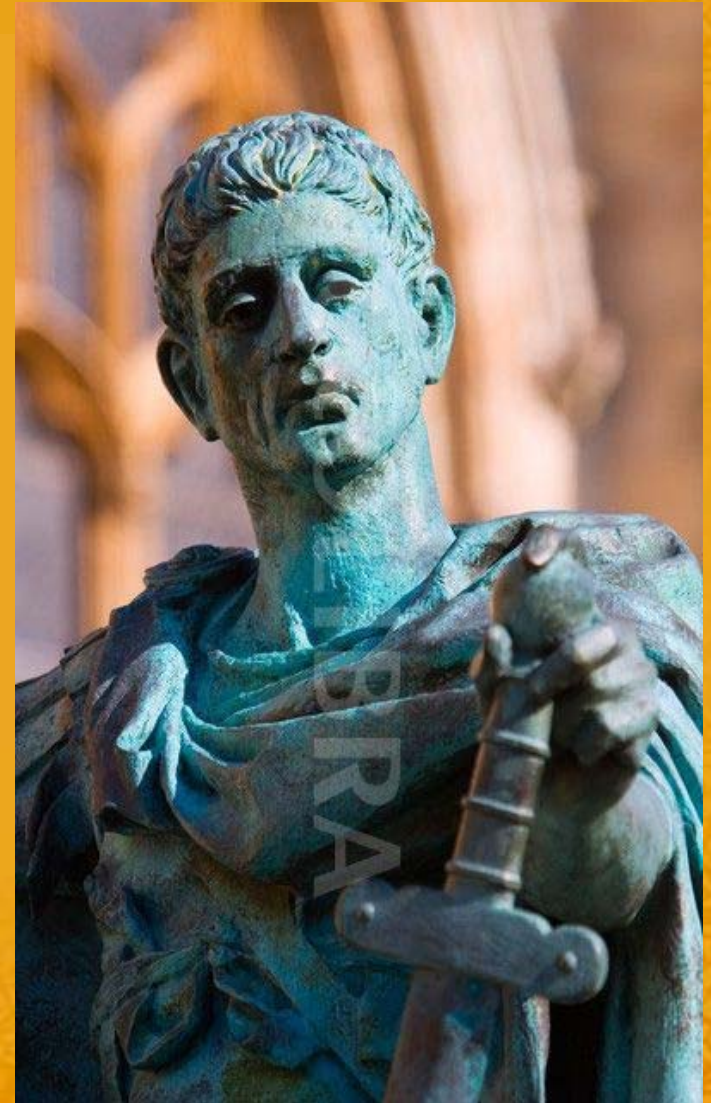
- **Jesus of Nazareth:** born at the beginning of CE – born as a Jew, but preached different views
- **‘Christ’** (from Greek *Khristos*) meaning **Messiah** (the ‘anointed one’) was added later to his name – punished to death by the Romans – **Crucifixion** of Jesus (between 30 and 33 CE)
- Saving humanity from sin – forgiveness and love for one’s enemies – “*Do unto others as you would have others do unto you*”
- **Apostle** (‘follower’ or ‘witness’) **Paul** spread the religion after the death of Jesus

Crucified Jesus



Spread of Christianity

- Gradual spread till the end of 3rd century
- Persecution by **Nero** (R. 54 – 68 CE) and other emperors
- Rapid spread after emperor **Constantine** converted in 312 CE
- **Catholic** (universal) Christianity became official religion of Rome in late 4th century
- Spread mostly among the poorer people and women, but also had rich patrons



Constantine The Great

(c. 272 CE – 337 CE)

Did Nero actually fiddle?



Spread of Christianity (contd.)

- Attractions of Christianity: **martyrdom**
– **salvation** in the next life – closely
bonded **congregations** helping each
other in times of need – well organized
church

Christianity after Rome

- Grew within Roman empire, but survived its fall - became the most influential religion in the region
- Split in Christianity (**Great Schism**) in 1054 into western or **Roman Catholic Church** and Eastern or **Eastern Orthodox Church** due to political as well as religious reasons

Study Questions

- What were the main causes of the fall of the Roman Empire?
- What role did slavery play in the fall of the Empire?
- What kind of religion did the Romans follow?
- Examine the legacy of the Roman Empire.
- How did Christianity spread within the Roman Empire?
- Narrate the growth of Christianity after the fall of Roman Empire.

Thank You