DIS-COINS-Constantine I-Sol Invictus

 

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| Authentic Ancient Coin of: |
| [**Constantine I 'The Great'**](http://stores.ebay.com/Authentic-Ancient-Greek-Roman-Coins/_i.html?_nkw=constantine+great&submit=Search) **-** [**Roman Emperor**](http://stores.ebay.com/Authentic-Ancient-Greek-Roman-Coins/Roman-Coin-Collecting-Guide.html)**: 307-337 A.D. -**  Bronze Follis 20mm (3.58 grams) Lugdunum mint 316 A.D. Reference: Lyons RIC VII 20   IMP CONSTANTINVS AVG, laureate, cuirassed bust right   SOLI INVICTO COMITI, Sol standing left, holding right hand high in salute and globe,  T-F across fields, PLG in ex. Royal/Imperial symbols of power Ruling dynasties often exploit pomp and ceremony with the use of [regalia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regalia): [crowns](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crown_(headgear%2529), [robes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robe), [orb (globe) and sceptres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orb_and_sceptre), some of which are reflections of formerly practical objects. The use of language mechanisms also support this differentiation with subjects talking of "the crown" and/or of "the [throne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Throne)" rather than referring directly to personal names and items.  Monarchies provide the most explicit demonstration of tools to strengthen the elevation of leaders. Thrones sit high on platforms leading to subjects lifting their gaze (if they have permission) to contemplate the ruler.      Roman Imperial repoussé silver disc dedicated to Sol Invictus (3rd century), found at [Pessinus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pessinus) (Bala-Hissar, Asia Minor). Roman artwork, 3rd century CE. British Museum, upper floor, room 69: Greek and Roman life. Accession number: GR 1899.12-1.2 (Cat. Silver 227); Bequeathed by Sir A.W. Franks  **Sol Invictus** ("Unconquered Sun") was the official sun god of the later [Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) and a patron of soldiers. In 274 the Roman emperor Aurelian made it an official [cult](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cult) alongside the traditional Roman cults. Scholars disagree whether the new deity was a refoundation of the ancient [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latins_(Italic_tribe%2529) cult of [Sol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_(mythology%2529),a revival of the cult of [Elagabalus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus_(deity%2529) or completely new. The god was favored by emperors after Aurelian and appeared on their coins until [Constantine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great). The last inscription referring to Sol Invictus dates to 387 AD and there were enough devotees in the 5th century that [Augustine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) found it necessary to preach against them (Halsberghe, p.170, n.4: Augustine, *Sermones*, XII; also in *Ennaratio in Psalmum* XXV; *Ennaratio* II, 3.).  It is commonly claimed that the date of 25 December for [Christmas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas) was selected in order to correspond with the Roman festival of *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*, or "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun", but this view is challenged *Invictus* as epithet [*Invictus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invictus_(epithet%2529) ("Unconquered, Invincible") was an [epithet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epithet) for [several deities](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Roman_deities) of [classical Roman religion](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Rome), including the supreme deity [Jupiter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jupiter_(mythology%2529), the war god [Mars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars_(mythology%2529), [Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules), [Apollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo) and [Silvanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silvanus_(mythology%2529).[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-8) *Invictus* was in use from the 3rd century BC, and was well-established as a [cult](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_ancient_Roman_religion" \l "cultus) title when applied to [Mithras](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mithraic_Mysteries" \l "Mithras_Sol_Invictus) from the 2nd century onwards. It has a clear association[[*vague*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Vagueness)] with solar deities and solar monism; as such, it became the preferred epithet of Rome's traditional [Sol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_(mythology%2529) and the novel, short-lived Roman state cult to [Elagabalus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus_(deity%2529), an [Emesan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emesa) solar deity who headed Rome's official pantheon under his [namesake emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus).  The earliest dated use of *Sol invictus* is in a dedication from Rome, AD 158. Another, stylistically dated to the 2nd century AD, is inscribed on a Roman [*phalera*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phalera_(military_decoration%2529): *"inventori lucis soli invicto augusto"* (to the contriver of light, sol invictus augustus ). Here "augustus" is most likely a further epithet of Sol as "august" (an elevated being, divine or close to divinity), though the association of Sol with the Imperial house would have been unmistakable and was already established in iconography and stoic monism. These are the earliest attested examples of Sol as *invictus*, but in AD 102 a certain [Anicetus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anicetus) restored a shrine of Sol; Hijmans (2009, 486, n. 22) is tempted "to link Anicetus' predilection for Sol with his name, the [Latinized](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization) form of the Greek word ἀνίκητος, which means *invictus*". Elagabalus The first sun god consistently termed *invictus* was the [provincial Syrian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria_(Roman_province%2529) god [Elagabalus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus_(deity%2529). According to the [*Historia Augusta*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustan_History), the [teenaged Severan heir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus) adopted the name of his deity and brought his cult image from Emesa to Rome. Once installed as emperor, he neglected Rome's traditional State deities and promoted his own as Rome's most powerful deity. This ended with his murder in 222.  The *Historia Augusta* refers to the deity Elagabalus as "also called Jupiter and Sol" (*fuit autem Heliogabali vel Iovis vel Solis*).This has been seen as an abortive attempt to impose the Syrian sun god on Rome;but because it is now clear that the Roman cult of Sol remained firmly established in Rome throughout the Roman period,this Syrian [Sol Elagabalus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus_(deity%2529) has become no more relevant to our understanding of the Roman [Sol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_(mythology%2529) than, for example, the Syrian [Jupiter Dolichenus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jupiter_Dolichenus) is for our understanding of the Roman Jupiter.      Sol Invictus Aurelian The Roman [*gens*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gens) Aurelian was associated with the cult of Sol. After his victories in the East, the Emperor [Aurelian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian) thoroughly reformed the Roman cult of Sol, elevating the sun-god to one of the premier divinities of the Empire. Where previously priests of Sol had been simply *[sacerdotes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_ancient_Roman_religion" \l "sacerdos)* and tended to belong to lower ranks of Roman society, they were now *pontifices* and members of the new [college of pontifices](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_of_Pontiffs) instituted by Aurelian. Every pontifex of Sol was a member of the senatorial elite, indicating that the priesthood of Sol was now highly prestigious. Almost all these senators held other priesthoods as well, however, and some of these other priesthoods take precedence in the inscriptions in which they are listed, suggesting that they were considered more prestigious than the priesthood of Sol.Aurelian also built a new temple for Sol, bringing the total number of temples for the god in Rome to (at least) four[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-21) He also instituted games in honor of the sun god, held every four years from AD 274 onwards.  The identity of Aurelian's Sol Invictus has long been a subject of scholarly debate. Based on the [Historia Augusta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historia_Augusta), some scholars have argued that it was based on [Sol Elagablus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elagabalus_(deity%2529) (or Elagabla) of [Emesa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emesa). Others, basing their argument on [Zosimus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zosimus), suggest that it was based on the [Helios](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helios), the solar god of [Palmyra](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palmyra) on the grounds that Aurelian placed and consecrated a cult statue of Helios looted from Palmyra in the temple of Sol Invictus. Professor Gary Forsythe discusses these arguments and add a third more recent one based on the work of Steven Hijmans. Hijmans argues that Aurelian's solar deity was simply the traditional Greco-Roman Sol Invictus. Constantine Emperors portrayed Sol Invictus on their official coinage, with a wide range of legends, only a few of which incorporated the epithet *invictus*, such as the legend SOLI INVICTO COMITI, claiming the Unconquered Sun as a companion to the Emperor, used with particular frequency by Constantine.Statuettes of Sol Invictus, carried by the standard-bearers, appear in three places in reliefs on the [Arch of Constantine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Constantine). Constantine's official coinage continues to bear images of Sol until 325/6. A [solidus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidus_(coin%2529) of Constantine as well as a gold medallion from his reign depict the Emperor's bust in profile twinned ("jugate") with Sol Invictus, with the legend INVICTUS CONSTANTINUS  Constantine decreed (March 7, 321) *dies Solis*—day of the sun, "[Sunday](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunday)"—as the Roman day of rest [CJ3.12.2]:  On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain-sowing or vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.  Constantine's triumphal arch was carefully positioned to align with the [colossal statue of Sol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colossus_of_Nero) by the [Colosseum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colosseum), so that Sol formed the dominant backdrop when seen from the direction of the main approach towards the arch.[[26]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-26) Sol and the other Roman Emperors Berrensdeals with coin-evidence of Imperial connection to the Solar cult. Sol is depicted sporadically on imperial coins in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, then more frequently from [Septimius Severus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimius_Severus) onwards until AD 325/6. *Sol invictus* appears on coin legends from AD 261, well before the reign of Aurelian.Connections between the imperial radiate crown and the cult of Sol are postulated. [Augustus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus) was posthumously depicted with radiate crown, as were living emperors from [Nero](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero) (after AD 65) to [Constantine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I). Some modern scholarship interprets the imperial radiate crown as a divine, solar association rather than an overt symbol of Sol; Bergmann calls it a pseudo-object designed to disguise the divine and solar connotations that would otherwise be politically controversial but there is broad agreement that coin-images showing the imperial radiate crown are stylistically distinct from those of the solar crown of rays; the imperial radiate crown is depicted as a real object rather than as symbolic light. Hijmans argues that the Imperial radiate crown represents the honorary wreath awarded to [Augustus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus), perhaps posthumously, to commemorate his victory at the [battle of Actium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Actium); he points out that henceforth, living emperors were depicted with radiate crowns, but state *divi* were not. To Hijmans this implies the radiate crown of living emperors as a link to Augustus. His successors automatically inherited (or sometimes acquired) the same offices and honours due to Octavian as "saviour of the Republic" through his victory at Actium, piously attributed to Apollo-Helios. Wreaths awarded to victors at the Actian Games were radiate.  Sol Invictus and Christianity and Judaism    Mosaic of Christ as [Sol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun) or [Apollo-Helios](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helios) in Mausoleum M in the pre-4th-century necropolis beneath[[33]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-33) [St. Peter's in the Vatican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Peter's_Basilica), which many interpret as representing Christ  The [Philocalian calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chronography_of_354) of AD 354 gives a festival of "Natalis Invicti" on 25 December. There is limited evidence that this festival was celebrated before the mid-4th century. The idea that Christians chose to celebrate the birth of Jesus on 25 December because this was the date of an already existing festival of the Sol Invictus was expressed in an annotation to a manuscript of a work by 12th-century Syrian bishop [Jacob Bar-Salibi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Bar-Salibi). The scribe who added it wrote: "It was a custom of the Pagans to celebrate on the same 25 December the birthday of the Sun, at which they kindled lights in token of festivity. In these solemnities and revelries the Christians also took part. Accordingly when the doctors of the Church perceived that the Christians had a leaning to this festival, they took counsel and resolved that the true Nativity should be solemnised on that day."  This idea became popular especially in the 18th and 19th centuries and is still widely accepted.  In the judgement of the Church of England Liturgical Commission, this view has been seriously challenged by a view based on an old tradition, according to which the date of Christmas was fixed at nine months after 25 March, the date of the vernal equinox, on which the [Annunciation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annunciation) was celebrated. The Jewish calendar date of 14 Nisan was believed to be that of the beginning of creation, as well as of the Exodus and so of Passover, and Christians held that the new creation, both the death of Jesus and the beginning of his human life, occurred on the same date, which some put at 25 March in the Julian calendar.[[40]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-CofE-40)[[42]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-42)[[43]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-Senn-43) It was a traditional Jewish belief that great men lived a whole number of years, without fractions, so that Jesus was considered to have been conceived on 25 March, as he died on 25 March, which was calculated to have coincided with 14 Nisan.[[44]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus" \l "cite_note-44) [Sextus Julius Africanus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sextus_Julius_Africanus) (c.160 – c.240) gave 25 March as the day of creation and of the conception of Jesus. The tractate *De solstitia et aequinoctia conceptionis et nativitatis Domini nostri Iesu Christi et Iohannis Baptistae* falsely attributed to [John Chrysostom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Chrysostom) also argued that Jesus was conceived and crucified on the same day of the year and calculated this as 25 March.A passage of the *Commentary on the prophet Daniel* by [Hippolytus of Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippolytus_of_Rome), written in about 204, has also been appealed to.  Among those who have put forward this view are Louis Duchesne,Thomas J. Talley, David J. Rothenberg, J. Neil Alexander, and Hugh Wybrew.  Not all scholars who view the celebration of the birth of Jesus on 25 December as motivated by the choice of the winter solstice rather than calculated on the basis of the belief that he was conceived and died on 25 March agree that it constituted a deliberate Christianization of a festival of the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun. Michael Alan Anderson writes:  Both the sun and Christ were said to be born anew on December 25. But while the solar associations with the birth of Christ created powerful metaphors, the surviving evidence does not support such a direct association with the Roman solar festivals. The earliest documentary evidence for the feast of Christmas makes no mention of the coincidence with the winter solstice. Thomas Talley has shown that, although the Emperor Aurelian's dedication of a temple to the sun god in the Campus Martius (C.E. 274) probably took place on the 'Birthday of the Invincible Sun' on December 25, the cult of the sun in pagan Rome ironically did not celebrate the winter solstice nor any of the other quarter-tense days, as one might expect. The origins of Christmas, then, may not be expressly rooted in the Roman festival.  The same point is made by Hijmans: "It is cosmic symbolism...which inspired the Church leadership in Rome to elect the southern solstice, December 25, as the birthday of Christ ... While they were aware that pagans called this day the 'birthday' of Sol Invictus, this did not concern them and it did not play any role in their choice of date for Christmas." He also states that, "while the winter solstice on or around December 25 was well established in the Roman imperial calendar, there is no evidence that a religious celebration of Sol on that day antedated the celebration of Christmas".  The *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* also remarks on the uncertainty about the order of precedence between the celebrations of the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun and the birthday of Jesus: "This 'calculations' hypothesis potentially establishes 25 December as a Christian festival before Aurelian's decree, which, when promulgated, might have provided for the Christian feast both opportunity and challenge."  Susan K. Roll also calls "most extreme" the unproven hypothesis that "would call Christmas point-blank a 'christianization' of Natalis Solis Invicti, a direct conscious appropriation of the pre-Christian feast, arbitrarily placed on the same calendar date, assimilating and adapting some of its cosmic symbolism and abruptly usurping any lingering habitual loyalty that newly-converted Christians might feel to the feasts of the state gods".The comparison of Christ with the astronomical [Sun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sun) is common in ancient Christian writings. In the 5th century, [Pope Leo I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Leo_I) (the Great) spoke in several sermons on the Feast of the Nativity of how the celebration of Christ's birth coincided with increase of the sun's position in the sky. An example is: "But this Nativity which is to be adored in heaven and on earth is suggested to us by no day more than this when, with the early light still shedding its rays on nature, there is borne in upon our senses the brightness of this wondrous mystery.    Mosaic in the [Beth Alpha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beth_Alpha) synagogue, with the sun in the centre, surrounded by the twelve zodiac constellations and with the four seasons associated inaccurately with the constellations  A study of [Augustine of Hippo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustine_of_Hippo) remarks that his exhortation in a Christmas sermon, "Let us celebrate this day as a feast not for the sake of this sun, which is beheld by believers as much as by ourselves, but for the sake of him who created the sun", shows that he was aware of the coincidence of the celebration of Christmas and the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun, although this pagan festival was celebrated at only a few places and was originally a peculiarity of the Roman city calendar. It adds: "He also believes, however, that there is a reliable tradition which gives 25 December as the actual date of the birth of our Lord."By "the sun of righteousness" in [Malachi 4:2](http://bibref.hebtools.com/?book= Malachi&verse=4:2&src=ESV) "the [fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Fathers), from [Justin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justin_Martyr) downward, and nearly all the earlier commentators understand *Christ*, who is supposed to be described as the rising sun". The [New Testament](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) itself contains a hymn fragment: "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."[Clement of Alexandria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clement_of_Alexandria) wrote of "the Sun of the Resurrection, he who was born before the dawn, whose beams give light".  Christians adopted the image of the Sun ([Helios](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helios) or Sol Invictus) to represent Christ. In this portrayal he is a beardless figure with a flowing cloak in a chariot drawn by four white horses, as in the mosaic in Mausoleum M discovered under [Saint Peter's Basilica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter's_Basilica) and in an early-4th-century catacomb fresco. Clement of Alexandria had spoken of Christ driving his chariot in this way across the sky. The nimbus of the figure under Saint Peter's Basilica is described by some as *rayed*,as in traditional pre-Christian representations, but another has said: "Only the *cross-shaped* nimbus makes the Christian significance apparent" (emphasis added). Yet another has interpreted the figure as a representation of the sun with no explicit religious reference whatever, pagan or Christian.  The traditional image of the sun is used also in Jewish art. A mosaic floor in [Hamat Tiberias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamat_Tiberias) presents [David](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_David) as Helios surrounded by a ring with the signs of the [zodiac](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac).As well as in Hamat Tiberias, figures of Helios or Sol Invictus also appear in several of the very few surviving schemes of decoration surviving from Late Antique [synagogues](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue), including [Beth Alpha](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beth_Alpha), [Husefah](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Husefah&action=edit&redlink=1) (Husefa) and [Naaran](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naaran), all now in [Israel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Israel). He is shown in floor mosaics, with the usual radiate halo, and sometimes in a [quadriga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quadriga), in the central roundel of a circular representation of the zodiac or the seasons. These combinations "may have represented to an agricultural Jewish community the perpetuation of the annual cycle of the universe or ... the central part of a calendar".  **Constantine the Great** ([Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language): *Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus Augustus*; 27 February c. 272 – 22 May 337), also known as **Constantine I** or **Saint Constantine**, was [Roman Emperor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Emperor) from 306 to 337. Well known for being the first Roman emperor to [be converted](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great_and_Christianity) to [Christianity](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), Constantine and co-Emperor [Licinius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licinius) issued the [Edict of Milan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Milan) in 313, which proclaimed [tolerance of all religions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_toleration) throughout the empire.    Constantine defeated the emperors [Maxentius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxentius) and [Licinius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licinius) during civil wars. He also fought successfully against the [Franks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franks), [Alamanni](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alamanni), [Visigoths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Visigoths), and [Sarmatians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmatians) during his reign — even resettling parts of [Dacia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Dacia) which had been abandoned during the previous century. Constantine built a new imperial residence at [Byzantium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantium), naming it [New Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Rome). However, in Constantine's honor, people called it [Constantinople](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople), which would later be the capital of what is now known as the [Byzantine Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantine_Empire) for over one thousand years. Because of this, he is thought of as the founder of the Byzantine Empire.  Flavius Valerius Constantinus, as he was originally named, was born in the city of Naissus, [Dardania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dardania_(Europe%2529) province of [Moesia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moesia), in present-day [Niš](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niš), [Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbia), on 27 February of an uncertain year, probably near 272.His father was [Flavius Constantius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius_Chlorus), a native of [Dardania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dardania_(Europe%2529) province of Moesia (later [Dacia Ripensis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dacia_ripensis)). Constantius was a tolerant and politically skilled man. Constantine probably spent little time with his father. Constantius was an officer in the Roman army, part of the Emperor [Aurelian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian)'s imperial bodyguard. Constantius advanced through the ranks, earning the [governorship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_governor) of [Dalmatia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatia_(Roman_province%2529) from Emperor [Diocletian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian), another of Aurelian's companions from [Illyricum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praetorian_prefecture_of_Illyricum), in 284 or 285.Constantine's mother was [Helena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_of_Constantinople), a [Bithynian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bithynia) woman of low social standing.It is uncertain whether she was legally married to Constantius or merely his concubine  Helena gave birth to the future emperor [Constantine I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I) on 27 February of an uncertain year soon after 270 (probably around 272). At the time, she was in [Naissus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Naissus) ([Niš](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niš), [Serbia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Serbia)). In order to obtain a wife more consonant with his rising status, Constantius divorced Helena some time before 289, when he married [Theodora](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flavia_Maximiana_Theodora), Maximian's daughter.(The narrative sources date the marriage to 293, but the [Latin panegyric](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panegyrici_Latini) of 289 refers to the couple as already married). Helena and her son were dispatched to the court of [Diocletian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletian) at Nicomedia, where Constantine grew to be a member of the inner circle. Helena never remarried and lived for a time in obscurity, though close to her only son, who had a deep regard and affection for her.     She received the title of [*Augusta*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augusta_(honorific%2529) in 325 and died in 330 with her son at her side. She was buried in the [Mausoleum of Helena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mausoleum_of_Helena), outside [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome) on the [Via Labicana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Labicana). Her [sarcophagus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarcophagus) is on display in the [Pio-Clementine Vatican Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Museo_Pio-Clementino), although the connection is often questioned, next to her is the sarcophagus of her granddaughter Saint Constantina (Saint Constance). The elaborate reliefs contain hunting scenes. During her life, she gave many presents to the poor, released prisoners and mingled with the ordinary worshippers in modest attire.  Constantine received a formal education at Diocletian's court, where he learned Latin literature, Greek, and philosophy.  On 1 May 305, Diocletian, as a result of a debilitating sickness taken in the winter of 304–5, announced his resignation. In a parallel ceremony in Milan, Maximian did the same. Lactantius states that Galerius manipulated the weakened Diocletian into resigning, and forced him to accept Galerius' allies in the imperial succession. According to Lactantius, the crowd listening to Diocletian's resignation speech believed, until the very last moment, that Diocletian would choose Constantine and [Maxentius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maxentius) (Maximian's son) as his successors. It was not to be: Constantius and Galerius were promoted to Augusti, while [Severus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flavius_Valerius_Severus) and [Maximin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maximinus) were appointed their Caesars respectively. Constantine and Maxentius were ignored.  Constantine recognized the implicit danger in remaining at Galerius' court, where he was held as a virtual hostage. His career depended on being rescued by his father in the west. Constantius was quick to intervene. In the late spring or early summer of 305, Constantius requested leave for his son, to help him campaign in Britain. After a long evening of drinking, Galerius granted the request. Constantine's later propaganda describes how he fled the court in the night, before Galerius could change his mind. He rode from [post-house](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cursus_publicus) to post-house at high speed, [hamstringing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamstringing) every horse in his wake.By the time Galerius awoke the following morning, Constantine had fled too far to be caught. Constantine joined his father in [Gaul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Gaul), at Bononia ([Boulogne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boulogne-sur-Mer)) before the summer of 305.  From Bononia they crossed the [Channel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_Channel) to Britain and made their way to [Eboracum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eboracum) ([York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York)), capital of the province of [Britannia Secunda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannia_Secunda) and home to a large military base. Constantine was able to spend a year in northern Britain at his father's side, campaigning against the [Picts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picts) beyond [Hadrian's Wall](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadrian's_Wall) in the summer and autumn. Constantius's campaign, like that of [Septimius Severus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimius_Severus) before it, probably advanced far into the north without achieving great success. Constantius had become severely sick over the course of his reign, and died on 25 July 306 in [Eboracum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eboracum) ([York](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/York)). Before dying, he declared his support for raising Constantine to the rank of full Augustus. The [Alamannic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alamanni) king [Chrocus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chrocus), a barbarian taken into service under Constantius, then proclaimed Constantine as Augustus. The troops loyal to Constantius' memory followed him in acclamation. Gaul and Britain quickly accepted his rule; Iberia, which had been in his father's domain for less than a year, rejected it.  Constantine sent Galerius an official notice of Constantius's death and his own acclamation. Along with the notice, he included a portrait of himself in the robes of an Augustus. The portrait was wreathed in [bay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay_Laurel). He requested recognition as heir to his father's throne, and passed off responsibility for his unlawful ascension on his army, claiming they had "forced it upon him".Galerius was put into a fury by the message; he almost set the portrait on fire. His advisers calmed him, and argued that outright denial of Constantine's claims would mean certain war.Galerius was compelled to compromise: he granted Constantine the title "Caesar" rather than "Augustus" (the latter office went to Severus instead). Wishing to make it clear that he alone gave Constantine legitimacy, Galerius personally sent Constantine the emperor's traditional [purple robes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purple). Constantine accepted the decision. Constantine's share of the Empire consisted of Britain, Gaul, and Spain.  Because Constantine was still largely untried and had a hint of illegitimacy about him, he relied on his father's reputation in his early propaganda: the earliest panegyrics to Constantine give as much coverage to his father's deeds as to those of Constantine himself.Constantine's military skill and building projects soon gave the panegyrist the opportunity to comment favorably on the similarities between father and son, and Eusebius remarked that Constantine was a "renewal, as it were, in his own person, of his father's life and reign". Constantinian coinage, sculpture and oratory also shows a new tendency for disdain towards the "barbarians" beyond the frontiers. After Constantine's victory over the Alemanni, he minted a coin issue depicting weeping and begging Alemannic tribesmen—"The Alemanni conquered"—beneath the phrase "Romans' rejoicing".There was little sympathy for these enemies. As his panegyrist declared: "It is a stupid clemency that spares the conquered foe."    In 310, a dispossessed and power-hungry Maximian rebelled against Constantine while Constantine was away campaigning against the Franks. Maximian had been sent south to Arles with a contingent of Constantine's army, in preparation for any attacks by Maxentius in southern Gaul. He announced that Constantine was dead, and took up the imperial purple. In spite of a large donative pledge to any who would support him as emperor, most of Constantine's army remained loyal to their emperor, and Maximian was soon compelled to leave. Constantine soon heard of the rebellion, abandoned his campaign against the Franks, and marched his army up the Rhine. At Cabillunum ([Chalon-sur-Saône](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalon-sur-Saône)), he moved his troops onto waiting boats to row down the slow waters of the [Saône](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saône) to the quicker waters of the [Rhone](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhone). He disembarked at [Lugdunum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lugdunum) ([Lyon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyon)).Maximian fled to Massilia ([Marseille](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marseille)), a town better able to withstand a long siege than Arles. It made little difference, however, as loyal citizens opened the rear gates to Constantine. Maximian was captured and reproved for his crimes. Constantine granted some clemency, but strongly encouraged his suicide. In July 310, Maximian hanged himself.  The death of Maximian required a shift in Constantine's public image. He could no longer rely on his connection to the elder emperor Maximian, and needed a new source of legitimacy.In a speech delivered in Gaul on 25 July 310, the anonymous orator reveals a previously unknown dynastic connection to [Claudius II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claudius_II), a third-century emperor famed for defeating the Goths and restoring order to the empire. Breaking away from tetrarchic models, the speech emphasizes Constantine's ancestral prerogative to rule, rather than principles of imperial equality. The new ideology expressed in the speech made Galerius and Maximian irrelevant to Constantine's right to rule. Indeed, the orator emphasizes ancestry to the exclusion of all other factors: "No chance agreement of men, nor some unexpected consequence of favor, made you emperor," the orator declares to Constantine.      A gold multiple of "Unconquered Constantine" with [Sol Invictus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus), struck in 313. The use of Sol's image appealed to both the educated citizens of Gaul, who would recognize  in it Apollo's patronage of [Augustus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus) and the arts; and to Christians, who found solar monotheism less objectionable than the traditional pagan pantheon.    The oration also moves away from the religious ideology of the Tetrarchy, with its focus on twin dynasties of [Jupiter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jupiter_(mythology%2529) and [Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules). Instead, the orator proclaims that Constantine experienced a divine vision of [Apollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo) and [Victory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_(mythology%2529) granting him [laurel wreaths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel_wreath) of health and a long reign. In the likeness of Apollo Constantine recognized himself as the saving figure to whom would be granted "rule of the whole world", as the poet Virgil had once foretold. The oration's religious shift is paralleled by a similar shift in Constantine's coinage. In his early reign, the coinage of Constantine advertised [Mars](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mars_(mythology%2529) as his patron. From 310 on, Mars was replaced by [Sol Invictus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus), a god conventionally identified with Apollo.   |  | | --- | |  |   By the middle of 310, Galerius had become too ill to involve himself in imperial politics. His final act survives: a letter to the provincials posted in Nicomedia on 30 April 311, proclaiming an end to the persecutions, and the resumption of religious toleration. He died soon after the edict's proclamation, destroying what little remained of the tetrarchy. Maximin mobilized against Licinius, and seized Asia Minor. A hasty peace was signed on a boat in the middle of the Bosphorus. While Constantine toured Britain and Gaul, Maxentius prepared for war.He fortified northern Italy, and strengthened his support in the Christian community by allowing it to elect a new [Bishop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) of [Rome](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocese_of_Rome), [Eusebius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Eusebius).  Constantine's advisers and generals cautioned against preemptive attack on Maxentius; even his soothsayers recommended against it, stating that the sacrifices had produced unfavorable omens. Constantine, with a spirit that left a deep impression on his followers, inspiring some to believe that he had some form of supernatural guidance, ignored all these cautions. Early in the spring of 312,Constantine crossed the [Cottian Alps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cottian_Alps) with a quarter of his army, a force numbering about 40,000.The first town his army encountered was Segusium ([Susa](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Susa_(TO%2529), [Italy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Italy)), a heavily fortified town that shut its gates to him. Constantine ordered his men to set fire to its gates and scale its walls. He took the town quickly. Constantine ordered his troops not to loot the town, and advanced with them into northern Italy.  At the approach to the west of the important city of Augusta Taurinorum ([Turin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turin), Italy), Constantine met a large force of heavily armed Maxentian cavalry. In the ensuing [battle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Turin_(312%2529) Constantine's army encircled Maxentius' cavalry, flanked them with his own cavalry, and dismounted them with blows from his soldiers' iron-tipped clubs. Constantine's armies emerged victorious. Turin refused to give refuge to Maxentius' retreating forces, opening its gates to Constantine instead.Other cities of the north Italian plain sent Constantine embassies of congratulation for his victory. He moved on to Milan, where he was met with open gates and jubilant rejoicing. Constantine rested his army in Milan until mid-summer 312, when he moved on to [Brixia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brixia) ([Brescia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brescia)).  Brescia's army was easily dispersed, and Constantine quickly advanced to [Verona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verona), where a large Maxentian force was camped. Ruricius Pompeianus, general of the Veronese forces and Maxentius' praetorian prefect, was in a strong defensive position, since the town was surrounded on three sides by the [Adige](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adige). Constantine sent a small force north of the town in an attempt to cross the river unnoticed. Ruricius sent a large detachment to counter Constantine's expeditionary force, but was defeated. Constantine's forces successfully surrounded the town and laid siege. Ruricius gave Constantine the slip and returned with a larger force to oppose Constantine. Constantine refused to let up on the siege, and sent only a small force to oppose him. In the desperately fought [encounter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Verona_(312%2529) that followed, Ruricius was killed and his army destroyed.Verona surrendered soon afterwards, followed by [Aquileia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aquileia), Mutina ([Modena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Modena)),and [Ravenna](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ravenna). The road to Rome was now wide open to Constantine.  Maxentius prepared for the same type of war he had waged against Severus and Galerius: he sat in Rome and prepared for a siege. He still controlled Rome's praetorian guards, was well-stocked with African grain, and was surrounded on all sides by the seemingly impregnable [Aurelian Walls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian_Walls). He ordered all bridges across the [Tiber](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiber) cut, reportedly on the counsel of the gods, and left the rest of central Italy undefended; Constantine secured that region's support without challenge. Constantine progressed slowly along the [*Via Flaminia*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Via_Flaminia), allowing the weakness of Maxentius to draw his regime further into turmoil. Maxentius' support continued to weaken: at chariot races on 27 October, the crowd openly taunted Maxentius, shouting that Constantine was invincible. Maxentius, no longer certain that he would emerge from a siege victorious, built a temporary boat bridge across the Tiber in preparation for a field battle against Constantine. On 28 October 312, the sixth anniversary of his reign, he approached the keepers of the [Sibylline Books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sibylline_Books) for guidance. The keepers prophesied that, on that very day, "the enemy of the Romans" would die. Maxentius advanced north to meet Constantine in battle.  Maxentius organized his forces—still twice the size of Constantine's—in long lines facing the battle plain, with their backs to the river. Constantine's army arrived at the field bearing unfamiliar symbols on either its standards or its soldiers' shields.  Constantine was visited by a dream the night before the battle, wherein he was advised "to mark the heavenly sign of God on the shields of his soldiers...by means of a slanted letter X with the top of its head bent round, he marked Christ on their shields." Eusebius describes the sign as [Chi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chi_(letter%2529) (Χ) traversed by [Rho](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rho_(letter%2529) (Ρ): ☧, a symbol representing the first two letters of the Greek spelling of the word *Christos* or Christ.  Constantine deployed his own forces along the whole length of Maxentius' line. He ordered his cavalry to charge, and they broke Maxentius' cavalry. He then sent his infantry against Maxentius' infantry, pushing many into the Tiber where they were slaughtered and drowned. The battle was brief: Maxentius' troops were broken before the first charge. Maxentius' horse guards and praetorians initially held their position, but broke under the force of a Constantinian cavalry charge; they also broke ranks and fled to the river. Maxentius rode with them, and attempted to cross the bridge of boats, but he was pushed by the mass of his fleeing soldiers into the Tiber, and drowned. In Rome Constantine entered Rome on 29 October.He staged a grand [*adventus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventus_(ceremony%2529) in the city, and was met with popular jubilation. Maxentius' body was fished out of the Tiber and decapitated. His head was paraded through the streets for all to see. Unlike his predecessors, Constantine neglected to make the trip to the [Capitoline Hill](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitoline_Hill) and perform customary sacrifices at the [Temple of Jupiter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temple_of_Jupiter_(Capitoline_Hill%2529). He did, however, choose to honor the [Senatorial](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Senate) [Curia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curia_Julia) with a visit, where he promised to restore its ancestral privileges and give it a secure role in his reformed government: there would be no revenge against Maxentius' supporters.In response, the Senate decreed him "title of the first name", which meant his name would be listed first in all official documents, and acclaimed him as "the greatest Augustus". He issued decrees returning property lost under Maxentius, recalling political exiles, and releasing Maxentius' imprisoned opponents.  In the following years, Constantine gradually consolidated his military superiority over his rivals in the crumbling Tetrarchy. In 313, he met [Licinius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licinius) in [Milan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Milan) to secure their alliance by the marriage of Licinius and Constantine's half-sister [Constantia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flavia_Julia_Constantia). During this meeting, the emperors agreed on the so-called [Edict of Milan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Milan),officially granting full tolerance to Christianity and all religions in the Empire.The document had special benefits for Christians, legalizing their religion and granting them restoration for all property seized during Diocletian's persecution.  In the year 320, [Licinius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Licinius) reneged on the religious freedom promised by the [Edict of Milan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edict_of_Milan) in 313 and began to oppress Christians anew, generally without bloodshed, but resorting to confiscations and sacking of Christian office-holders.That became a challenge to Constantine in the West, climaxing in the great civil war of 324. Licinius, aided by [Goth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goths) [mercenaries](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercenary), represented the past and the ancient [Pagan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paganism) faiths. Constantine and his [Franks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franks) marched under the standard of the [*labarum*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labarum), and both sides saw the battle in religious terms. Outnumbered, but fired by their zeal, Constantine's army emerged victorious in the [Battle of Adrianople](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Adrianople_(324%2529). Licinius fled across the Bosphorus and appointed [Martius Martinianus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martinianus), the commander of his bodyguard, as Caesar, but Constantine next won the [Battle of the Hellespont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Hellespont), and finally the [Battle of Chrysopolis](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Chrysopolis) on 18 September 324.Licinius and Martinianus surrendered to Constantine at Nicomedia on the promise their lives would be spared: they were sent to live as private citizens in Thessalonica and Cappadocia respectively, but in 325 Constantine accused Licinius of plotting against him and had them both arrested and hanged; Licinius's son (the son of Constantine's half-sister) was also killed. Thus Constantine became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire. Foundation of Constantinople Licinius' defeat came to represent the defeat of a rival center of Pagan and Greek-speaking political activity in the East, as opposed to the Christian and Latin-speaking Rome, and it was proposed that a new Eastern capital should represent the integration of the East into the Roman Empire as a whole, as a center of learning, prosperity, and cultural preservation for the whole of the [Eastern Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Roman_Empire) . Among the various locations proposed for this alternative capital, Constantine appears to have toyed earlier with [Serdica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Sofia) (present-day [Sofia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sofia)), as he was reported saying that "*Serdica is my Rome*". [Sirmium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sirmium) and [Thessalonica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thessalonica) were also considered. Eventually, however, Constantine decided to work on the Greek city of [Byzantium](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byzantium), which offered the advantage of having already been extensively rebuilt on Roman patterns of urbanism, during the preceding century, by [Septimius Severus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septimius_Severus) and [Caracalla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caracalla), who had already acknowledged its strategic importance. The city was then renamed *Constantinopolis* ("Constantine's City" or [Constantinople](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople) in English), and issued special commemorative coins in 330 to honor the event. The new city was protected by the relics of the [True Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/True_Cross), the [Rod of Moses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nehushtan) and other holy [relics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Relic), though a cameo now at the [Hermitage Museum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermitage_Museum) also represented Constantine crowned by the [tyche](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyche) of the new city. The figures of old gods were either replaced or assimilated into a framework of [Christian symbolism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_symbolism). Constantine built the new [Church of the Holy Apostles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Apostles) on the site of a temple to [Aphrodite](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aphrodite). Generations later there was the story that a [divine vision](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vision_(religion%2529) led Constantine to this spot, and an [angel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angel) no one else could see, led him on a circuit of the new walls. The capital would often be compared to the 'old' Rome as *Nova Roma Constantinopolitana*, the "New Rome of Constantinople".      *Constantine the Great*, mosaic in [Hagia Sophia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagia_Sophia), c. 1000   Religious policy Constantine is perhaps best known for being the first "Christian" Roman emperor. Scholars debate whether Constantine adopted his mother [St. Helena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena_(Empress%2529)'s Christianity in his youth, or whether he adopted it gradually over the course of his life. Constantine was over 40 when he finally declared himself a Christian, writing to Christians to make clear that he believed he owed his successes to the protection of the Christian High God alone.Throughout his rule, Constantine supported the Church financially, built basilicas, granted privileges to clergy (e.g. exemption from certain taxes), promoted Christians to high office, and returned property confiscated during the Diocletianic persecution.His most famous building projects include the [Church of the Holy Sepulchre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Sepulchre), and [Old Saint Peter's Basilica](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Saint_Peter's_Basilica).  However, Constantine certainly did not patronize Christianity alone. After gaining victory in the Battle of the Milvian Bridge (312), a triumphal arch—the [Arch of Constantine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arch_of_Constantine)—was built (315) to celebrate his triumph. The arch is most notably decorated with images of the goddess [Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_(mythology%2529) and, at the time of its dedication, sacrifices to gods like [Apollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo), [Diana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_(goddess%2529), and [Hercules](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules) were made. Most notably absent from the Arch are any depictions whatsoever regarding Christian symbolism.  Later in 321, Constantine instructed that Christians and non-Christians should be united in observing the **venerable day of the sun**, referencing the [sun-worship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sol_Invictus) that [Aurelian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurelian) had established as an official cult. Furthermore, and long after his oft alleged "conversion" to Christianity, Constantine's coinage continued to carry the symbols of the sun. Even after the pagan gods had disappeared from the coinage, Christian symbols appeared only as Constantine's *personal* attributes: the [chi rho](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chi_rho) between his hands or on his [labarum](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labarum), but never on the coin itself. Even when Constantine dedicated the new capital of Constantinople, which became the seat of Byzantine Christianity for a millennium, he did so wearing the [Apollonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo) sun-rayed [Diadem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diadem); no Christian symbols were present at this dedication.  Constantine made new laws regarding the [Jews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jews). They were forbidden to own Christian slaves or to [circumcise](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brit_milah) their slaves.   Administrative reforms Beginning in the mid-3rd century the emperors began to favor members of the [equestrian order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equestrian_order) over senators, who had had a monopoly on the most important offices of state. Senators were stripped of the command of legions and most provincial governorships (as it was felt that they lacked the specialized military upbringing needed in an age of acute defense needs), such posts being given to equestrians by Diocletian and his colleagues—following a practice enforced piecemeal by their predecessors. The emperors however, still needed the talents and the help of the very rich, who were relied on to maintain social order and cohesion by means of a web of powerful influence and contacts at all levels. Exclusion of the old senatorial aristocracy threatened this arrangement.  In 326, Constantine reversed this pro-equestrian trend, raising many administrative positions to senatorial rank and thus opening these offices to the old aristocracy, and at the same time elevating the rank of already existing equestrians office-holders to senator, eventually wiping out the equestrian order—at least as a bureaucratic rank—in the process. One could become a senator, either by being elected [praetor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Praetor) or (in most cases) by fulfilling a function of senatorial rank: from then on, holding of actual power and social status were melded together into a joint imperial hierarchy. At the same time, Constantine gained with this the support of the old nobility, as the Senate was allowed itself to elect praetors and [quaestors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quaestors), in place of the usual practice of the emperors directly creating new magistrates (*adlectio*).  The Senate as a body remained devoid of any significant power; nevertheless, the senators, who had been marginalized as potential holders of imperial functions during the 3rd century, could now dispute such positions alongside more upstart bureaucrats. Some modern historians see in those administrative reforms an attempt by Constantine at reintegrating the senatorial order into the imperial administrative elite to counter the possibility of alienating pagan senators from a Christianized imperial rule.  Constantine's reforms had to do only with the civilian administration: the military chiefs, who since the [Crisis of the Third Century](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_of_the_Third_Century) had risen from the ranks, remained outside the senate, in which they were included only by Constantine's children.   Monetary reforms After the [runaway inflation of the third century](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crisis_of_the_Third_Century" \l "Economic_impact), associated with the production of [fiat money](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiat_money) to pay for public expenses, Diocletian had tried unsuccessfully to reestablish trustworthy minting of silver and [billon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billon_(alloy%2529) coins. The failure of the various Diocletianic attempts at the restoration of a functioning silver coin resided in the fact that the silver currency was overvalued in terms of its actual metal content, and therefore could only circulate at much discounted rates. Minting of the Diocletianic "pure" silver [*argenteus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argenteus) ceased, therefore, soon after 305, while the billon currency continued to be used until the 360s. From the early 300s on, Constantine forsook any attempts at restoring the silver currency, preferring instead to concentrate on minting large quantities of good standard gold pieces—the [solidus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidus_(coin%2529), 72 of which made a pound of gold. New (and highly debased) silver pieces would continue to be issued during Constantine's later reign and after his death, in a continuous process of retariffing, until this billon minting eventually ceased, *de jure*, in 367, with the silver piece being *de facto* continued by various denominations of bronze coins, the most important being the [*centenionalis*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centenionalis). Later emperors like [Julian the Apostate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_the_Apostate) tried to present themselves as advocates of the *humiles* by insisting on trustworthy mintings of the bronze currency.  Constantine's monetary policy was closely associated with his religious objectives, in that increased minting was associated with measures of confiscation—taken since 331 and closed in 336—of all gold, silver and bronze statues *from* pagan temples, which were declared as imperial property and, as such, as monetary assets. Two imperial commissioners for each province had the task of getting hold of the statues and having them melded for immediate minting—with the exception of a number of bronze statues which were used as public monuments for the beautification of the new capital in Constantinople[.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great" \l "cite_note-231) Later campaigns Constantine considered Constantinople as his capital and permanent residence. He lived there for a good portion of his later life. He rebuilt Trajan's bridge across the Danube, in hopes of reconquering [Dacia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Dacia), a province that had been abandoned under Aurelian. In the late winter of 332, Constantine campaigned with the [Sarmatians](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarmatian) against the [Goths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goth). The weather and lack of food cost the Goths dearly: reportedly, nearly one hundred thousand died before they submitted to Rome. In 334, after Sarmatian commoners had overthrown their leaders, Constantine led a campaign against the tribe. He won a victory in the war and extended his control over the region, as remains of camps and fortifications in the region indicate.Constantine resettled some Sarmatian exiles as farmers in Illyrian and Roman districts, and conscripted the rest into the army. Constantine took the title *Dacicus maximus* in 336. Sickness and death Constantine had known death would soon come. Within the Church of the Holy Apostles, Constantine had secretly prepared a final resting-place for himself. It came sooner than he had expected. Soon after the Feast of Easter 337, Constantine fell seriously ill. He left Constantinople for the hot baths near his mother's city of Helenopolis (Altinova), on the southern shores of the Gulf of İzmit. There, in a church his mother built in honor of Lucian the Apostle, he prayed, and there he realized that he was dying. Seeking purification, he became a [catechumen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catechumen), and attempted a return to Constantinople, making it only as far as a suburb of Nicomedia. He summoned the bishops, and told them of his hope to be baptized in the [River Jordan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Jordan), where Christ was written to have been baptized. He requested the baptism right away. The bishops, Eusebius records, "performed the sacred ceremonies according to custom". He chose the Arianizing bishop [Eusebius of Nicomedia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius_of_Nicomedia), bishop of the [city](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicomedia) where he lay dying, as his baptizer. In postponing his baptism, he followed one custom at the time which postponed baptism until after infancy. Constantine died soon after at a suburban villa called Achyron, on the last day of the fifty-day festival of Pentecost directly following Pascha (or Easter), on 22 May 337.[[246]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_the_Great" \l "cite_note-250)  Following his death, his body was transferred to Constantinople and buried in the [Church of the Holy Apostles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_the_Holy_Apostles) there. He was succeeded by his three sons born of Fausta, [Constantine II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_II_(emperor%2529), [Constantius II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantius_II) and [Constans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constans). A number of relatives were killed by followers of Constantius, notably Constantine's nephews [Dalmatius](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dalmatius) (who held the rank of Caesar) and [Hannibalianus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hannibalianus), presumably to eliminate possible contenders to an already complicated succession. He also had two daughters, [Constantina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantina) and [Helena](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helena,_wife_of_Julian), wife of [Emperor Julian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_the_Apostate).  Legacy  The Byzantine Empire considered Constantine its founder and the [Holy Roman Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire) reckoned him among the venerable figures of its tradition. In the later Byzantine state, it had become a great honor for an emperor to be hailed as a "new Constantine". Ten emperors, including the last emperor of Byzantium, carried the name. Most Eastern Christian churches consider Constantine a saint (Άγιος Κωνσταντίνος, Saint Constantine). In the Byzantine Church he was called *isapostolos* (Ισαπόστολος Κωνσταντίνος) —an [equal of the Apostles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equal-to-apostles). [Niš airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niš_Constantine_the_Great_Airport) is named Constantine the Great in honor of his birth in Naissus. |

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