

# Constantine the Great



*All 3 photos are depictions of Constantine the Great. They may look different, but that is only because they have been drawn/created by different artists throughout history. They are all historical sources that depict the same famous historical figure – historical sources have been known to vary (a word meaning “be different from”) each other because they come from different sources.*

Constantine was a Christian Emperor of the Roman Empire. He is also known as Constantine I or Constantine the Great. He was born around 272 CE and died in 337 CE. He is best known for his association with Christianity, being one of the emperors of Rome, and changing the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, which he later renamed Constantinople.

When Constantine was 52 years old, he became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire and a sense of stability returned to Rome. Constantine realized that Old Rome was not the city he wanted for a capital, and despite several of the building projects he instituted, it was decaying. Rome was no longer practical. A new capital was needed, and although he thought about the site of ancient Troy, Constantine finally saw what he wanted - Byzantium. The ancient city was strategically located on the European side of the Strait of Bosphorus, so it would control traffic to and from the Black Sea. It also provided an excellent harbor (The Golden Horn) and, therefore, could be easily defended.

To rebuild the city into the one in his vision, he brought in artisans and resources from across the empire. There were wide avenues (roads) with statues of Alexander the Great, Caesar, Augustus, Diocletian, and of course, Constantine. He rebuilt the walls, built cisterns, Christian churches (Hagia Irene) and pagan temples. It was a city that remained classical yet inspired by a Christian god. In 330 CE the city was officially named Constantinople and became the capital of Rome.