

I. **Constantine ruled as Emperor of the Roman Empire from 306-337 A.D.** and his reign was to mark one of the great turning points in church history.



A. Constantine engaged in several wars with competitors to establish himself firmly on the throne.

B. On the eve of one of these battles at Milvain Bridge, just outside Roman, on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 312 A.D., he had a vision and saw in the sky a flaming cross and above it the words, “By this you shalt conquer.”

1. He decided to fight under the banner of Christ, and he won the battle.

2. Constantine interpreted this to mean he should become a Christian.

3. Constantine was the first Roman Emperor to publicly accept Christianity.

**Emperor Constantine (A.D. 280– 337) reigned over a major transition in the Roman Empire.** His acceptance of Christianity and his establishment of an eastern capital city, which would later bear his name, mark his rule as a significant pivot point between ancient history and the Middle Ages.

II. **The marriage of the Roman Empire and Christianity.**

A. In 313 A.D. Constantine gave a call for the coming together of all the churches or their representatives.

1. Many, **but not all the churches** came to this council. Many true churches would have no part in this error.

2. At the assembly of the churches in 313 A.D., Constantine gave the favor of Empire to Christianity and pronounced himself as the head of the churches.

B. This hierarchy (body of church rulers) formed by Constantine was the definite beginning of a development which finally resulted in what is now known as the Catholicism. The indefinite beginning of Catholicism was at the close of the second century when the errors concerning bishops and preacher-church government began to form.

C. Let it be remembered that many churches refused to attend this meeting or to be identified with this new group.

D. True New Testament churches (Baptists) were in existence before the error of Roman Catholicism ever began.

E. At the time of this meeting, Constantine did not claim to be a Christian but that he intended to be one.

1. The erring churches who went with him into this organization taught the heresy of “baptismal regeneration.”

2. A serious question arose in the mind of Constantine, “if I am saved from my sins by baptism, what is to become of my sins which I may commit after my baptism?” Correspondingly, Constantine waited until just before his death to be baptized.

### III. Christianity in the favor of the world.

- A. Constantine granted many special favors to Christians:
  1. He filled the chief offices of the government with Christians.
  2. He exempted ministers from taxes and military services.
  3. He compelled his court to embrace Christianity.
- B. In 325 A.D. he issued an edict to all his subjects commanding them to embrace Christianity.

### IV. Christianity as a “State Religion.”

- A. Although Constantine had in effect made Christianity the “state religion” of the Roman Empire, it became so under the Emperor Theodosius from 379-395 A.D.
- B. Theodosius made church membership compulsory under law.



**Theodosius I, also known as Theodosius the Great**, was a Roman emperor from 379 to 395. He won two civil wars and was instrumental in establishing the Nicene Creed as the orthodox doctrine for Nicene Christianity.

### V. Up to the organization of this hierarchy and the uniting of church and state, all the persecution of the Christians had been accomplished either by Judaism or Paganism.

- A. Now comes a serious change. Christians (in name) began to persecute other Christians.
- B. The Christians (in name) in the hierarchy began using the law to compel all Christians to join the organization.
- C. True churches refused and the persecution in the name of Christ began.

### VI. Those who refused to submit the “state religion” were called by many names, sometimes by one name or another. Montanists, Paulicans, Novationists, Paterines, Donatists, Albigenses, and Anabaptists were among the names used to identify those who refused to identify with Rome.