1. Odoacer, the first barbarian king of Rome – AD 476
2. The Visigoths rule all the Roman conquests west of the Alps
3. Clovis establishes the French monarchy in Gaul
4. The struggle of Britain
5. ‘The decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness’
6. Theodoric the Ostrogoth
7. Theodoric ...‘sheathed his sword’ in the pride and vigour of his age
8. Justinian ascends the Byzantine throne AD 527, and shares supreme power with Theodora
9. Belisarius, a loyal and proved commander
10. Belisarius, cursed in love in his marriage to Antonina
11. The Gothic courage revives
12. The games of antiquity – the struggle of the green and the blue factions
13. The Festival of the Ides of January in the fifth year of Justinian’s reign
14. The end of Belisarius
15. The new emperor – Justin, nephew of Justinian
16. The virtues and merits of Tiberius
17. The emperor Maurice
18. The fate of Rome at the close of the sixth century and the rise of Pope Gregory the First
19. Maurice abdicates and is succeeded by Phocas
20. The victory of Heraclius against the Persians
21 A melancholy task 7:47
22 Martina, Constantine III, Constans II, Justinian II – in quick succession 7:49
23 Justinian returns with vengeance 8:01
24 Leo IV, the son of the fifth Constantine, and father of the sixth 4:34
25 Leo V and Michael II, Michael III 3:25
26 Basil the Macedonian, Leo VI, Constantine, John Zimisces 1:57
27 The rise of the Comnenian dynasty 6:44
28 Manuel I reigns for 37 years 4:43
29 Andronicus rules, firstly from behind the emperor, and then with the sceptre 10:20
30 Six hundred years filled with sixty emperors 5:23
31 The rise of Islam 2:59
32 The concept of the holy war 9:22
33 A sinful and a fanatic world 5:41
34 The departure of the pilgrims 7:03
35 The effect of the crusades 8:05
36 The Palaelogi dynasty of the early 14th century 6:50
37 The rise of Genghis Khan and the Mongol empire in the East 9:05
38 The Mongol invasion of the West 4:31
39 The rise of Timour – Tamerlaine 7:47
40 Timour turns his eyes towards the Ottomans 11:53
1422 – Constantinople once more under siege by Turkish armies
Mohammed II, ‘The Great Destroyer’ and the final act of the Byzantine empire
The response of Christendom
A city of 13 miles defended by 8,000 soldiers
The great cannon of Mohammed
A siege of 40 days, breaches on all sides
29th May 1453
Fleeing to the church of St Sophia
The legitimate reward of the conqueror
The fate of Constantine
The incomparable position, a new future
The effect on Christendom
The religious schism in the Christian church
Reflections of Pope Eugenius IV and the learned Poggius on the top of the Capitoline Hill in 1430
The four principal causes of the ruin of the Roman Empire –
1) The injuries of time and nature
2) The hostile attacks of the barbarians and Christians
3) The use and abuse of materials
4) The domestic quarrels of the Romans
Rome in the days of Gibbon

Total time: 7:10:30
'At the outset all was dark and doubtful: even the title of the work, the true era of the Decline and Fall of the Empire, the limits of the introduction, the division of the chapters, and the order of the narrative; and I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years. The style of an author should be the image of his mind; but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise.'

Thus in his Memoirs of My Life (published posthumously in 1795) does Edward Gibbon hint of his nervous anticipation concerning the undertaking of his life’s central labour, the composition of his massive, magisterial The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, published between 1776-88.

This recording is an abridgement of that work’s final three volumes, a previous Naxos AudioBooks issue having covered the first three, up to the collapse of Rome and the Western empire, and the accession of the first barbarian king of Italy, Odoacer, in about AD 480. It thus covers the vast scope of almost 1,000 years, and focuses on the moral, political and military decline of the Byzantine empire, the empire of the East, and in particular its capital city, Constantinople. The final three volumes are rather more discursive and digressive than the first: there are moments where the complex narrative threatens to come apart, bulging as it does with a vast array of embryonic nations and ethnic groups, all squabbling among themselves like dozens of cats in a sack. This abridgement is aimed therefore at conveying the core narrative line that Gibbon traces.

What became known as the Byzantine empire was in fact the eastern half of the Roman empire. It survived for a thousand years after the collapse and fragmentation into assorted petty feudal kingdoms of the western half. The empire of the east finally succumbed to Turkish onslaughts in 1453, when the last emperor, Constantine XI, died, fighting on the battlements of Constantinople, the capital city of the
empire. Constantinople – originally named Byzantium – had been an ancient Greek colony, founded on the European side of the Bosphorus. When the Roman emperor Constantine I took it over in 330 he decided to name this ‘New Rome’, capital of the eastern half of his empire, after himself.

The eastern part of the empire was very different from that which came under the sway of Rome, being very Hellenistic in outlook and culture, much more commercial and cosmopolitan, and ultimately a far richer place than the original seat of empire. Despite their separation from Rome in both space and time, the Byzantine emperors nevertheless spiritually considered themselves Romans. But they were considerably more gifted than their Roman forebears had been at resisting the diplomatic blandishments and military batterings of outsiders. In the case of Byzantium, as the eastern empire also came to be known, those would-be intruders predominantly derived from nations owing allegiance to Islam. The same emperors also felt that it was their duty to be devoted to the ideal, if not the reality, of retaking Rome from the various barbarian armies that followed in the footsteps of Odoacer.

Since Gibbon, historians have concurred in his judgement that the greatest of the Byzantine emperors was Justinian I, who reigned between 527-565. Justinian attracts Gibbon because he was both a noble statesman and also a successful warrior. Gibbon is further enchanted by Justinian’s obvious interest in that very eighteenth-century obsession, social and legal reform. But, as ever with Gibbon, the nature of man is to be imperfect: Gibbon gives a very balanced final assessment of Justinian I; his equally powerful wife, Theodora, lets him down, as we hear in this recording.

But beyond Justinian are many other equally colourful characters, and events of great – and low – magnitude. Those listeners who are more familiar with the history of the western empire, of Rome proper, will not be disappointed with the events covered by Gibbon in his final three volumes. The mendacity, brutality, lust, corruption and much else enjoyed by the Roman emperors did not escape those of their successors in Constantinople.

Gibbon writes in his Memoirs at the end that ‘twenty happy years have been animated by the labour of my history,’ adding that the ‘freedom of my writings has indeed provoked an implacable tribe; but as I was safe from the stings, I was soon
accustomed to the buzzing of the hornets.’ It could be argued that, besides the sheer glory of his panoramic depiction of some of the most important characters and events in the sweep of humanity, the greatest contribution of his History is that it teaches us all we ever need to know about the workings of the human heart. Gibbon was a true Augustan, wedded to the values of dispassionate commonsense, rationality above all things, and a refusal to be swayed by the meretricious. His History instructs us (an entirely different process from being lectured to) on the method of achieving the kind of Zen-like indifference to both good and ill fortune that Gibbon himself appears to have embraced towards the end of his life. Here he is in his Memoirs again:

‘At the age of twenty, one year is a tenth perhaps of the time which has elapsed within our consciousness and memory; at the age of fifty it is no more than a fortieth, and this relative value continues to decrease till the last sands are shaken by the hand of death...’ The warm desires, the long expectations of youth are founded on the ignorance of themselves and of the world. They are generally dampened by time and experience, by disappointment or possession; and after the middle season, the crowd must be content to remain at the foot of the mountain, while the few who have climbed the summit, aspire to descend or expect to fall. In old age, the consolation of hope is reserved for the tenderness of parents, who commence a new life in their children; the faith of enthusiasts who sing hallelujahs above the clouds; and the vanity of authors who presume the immortality of their name and writings.’ Many of the emperors and empresses who pass before our view here have long been forgotten, perhaps undeservedly in some cases. But Edward Gibbon is a name that has survived them all.
Roman Emperors in the East
306-337  Constantine I
337-361  Constantius (sole emperor after 351)
361-363  Julian the Apostate (sole emperor)
363-364  Jovian (sole emperor)
364-378  Valens

Dynasty of Theodosius
379-395  Theodosius I the Great (sole emperor after 392)
395-408  Arcadius
408-450  Theodosius II (Anthemius: Regent 408-414)
450-457  Marcian (m. Pulcheria, daughter of Theodosius II)

Dynasty of Leo
457-474  Leo I
474     Leo II
474-491  Zeno
491-518  Anastasius

Dynasty of Justinian
518-527  Justin I
527-565  Justinian I
565-578  Justin II (Sophia: Regent)
573-574  Tiberius: Regent 574-578
578-582  Tiberius II
582-602  Maurice
602-610  Phocas

Dynasty of Heraclius
610-641  Heraclius
(613-641) Constantine III
(638-641) Heracleonas (Martina: Regent 641)
641-668  Constans II
(659-668) Constantine IV
(659-681) Heraclius
(659-681) Tiberius
668-685  Constantine IV
685-695  Justinian II (banished)
695-698  Leontius
698-705  Tiberius III
705-711  Justinian II (restored)
711-713  Bardanes
713-716  Anastasius II
716-717  Theodosius III

Syrian or Isaurian Dynasty (the Iconoclasts)
717-741  Leo III
741-775  Constantine V Copronymus
775-780  Leo IV
780-797  Constantine VI (blinded and murdered by mother Irene, wife of Leo IV)
797-802  Irene
802-811  Nicephorus I
811     Strauracius
811-813  Michael I
813-820  Leo V
### Phrygian or Amorian Dynasty
- 820-829: Michael II
- 829-842: Theophilus
- 842-867: Michael III

### Macedonian Dynasty
- 867-886: Basil I
- 886-912: Leo VI the wise and Alexander
- 912-959: Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus
- 919-944: Romanus I Lecapenus (co-emperor with Constantine VII until 944. His son Constantine VIII attempted usurpation in 924)
- 959-963: Romanus II
- 963: Regency of Theophano, widow of Romanus II for her infant sons Basil II and Constantine VIII (IX). Theophano married:
- 963-969: Nicephorus II murdered by:
- 969-976: John I Zimiskes
- 976-1025: Basil II
- 1025-1028: Constantine VIII (IX)
- 1028-1050: Zoe married:
- 1028-1034: a. Romanus III Argyrus
- 1034-1031: b. Michael IV the Paphlagonian
- 1041-1042: Zoe adopted Michael V Calaphates

### Dynasty of the Comneni
- 1081-1118: Alexius I Comnenus
- 1118-1143: John II Calojohannes
- 1143-1180: Manuel I Comnenus
- 1180-1183: Alexius II Comnenus
- 1183-1185: Andronicus I Comnenus

### Dynasty of the Angeli
- 1185-1195: Isaac II Angelus (dethroned)
- 1195-1203: Alexius III Angelus
- 1203-1204: Isaac II (restored) with Alexius IV Angeli
- 1204: Alexius V Ducas Murtzuphius
- 1204: Capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade and establishment of Latin emperors in the city
Eastern Roman Emperors in Nicaea
1204-1222 Theodorus I Lascaris
1222-1254 John III Ducas Vatatzes
1254-1258 Theodorus II Lascaris
1258-1261 John IV Lascaris
1259-1282 Michael VIII Palaeologus
1261 Recapture of Constantinople and re-establishment of the Eastern emperors there

Dynasty of the Palaeologi
1261-1282 Michael VIII Palaeologus
1282-1328 Andronicus II
1328-1341 Andronicus III
(1293-1320) Michael IX
1341-1391 John V Cantacuzenus
1341-1354 John VI Cantacuzenus
1376-1379 Andronicus IV
1379-1391 John V (restored)
1390 John VII
1391-1425 Manuel II
1425-1448 John VIII
1449-1453 Constantine XI (XIII) Dragases
1453 Capture of Constantinople by Mahomet II

End of the Roman Empire

Notes by Gary Mead
The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue

**BERWALD** SYMPHONY NO. 1  
Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Okku Kamu  
8.553051

**LISZT** SYMPHONIC POEMS Polish NRSO, Michael Halasz  
8.550487

**BRUCH** SYMPHONY NO. 3 Hungarian Symphony Orchestra, Manfred Honeck  
8.555985

**D’INDY** L’ETRANGER Wurttemberg Philharmonic, Giles Nopre  
8.223659

**BALAKIREV** SYMPHONY NO. 1/ISLAMEY ETC. Russian State Symphony  
Orchestra, Igor Golovschin  
8.550792

**VOLKMANN** OVERTURE TO RICHARD III Czecho-Slovak RSO Ondrej Lenard  
8.550230

**GLAZUNOV** OVERTURE ON GREEK THEMES NO. 1 ETC.  
Hong Kong Philharmonic, Kenneth Schermerhorn  
8.220309

**CIURLIONIS** THE SEA  
Slovak Philharmonic, Juozas Domarkas  
8.223323

Music programming by Nicolas Soames
The two-headed Imperial eagle was the emblem of the Palaeologus family, the last Byzantine dynasty.
Edward Gibbon

The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire

Part II

Read by Philip Madoc with Neville Jason

Edward Gibbon’s *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* occupies an immortal place in the pantheon of historical masterpieces. This six-disc recording covers the final three volumes of Gibbon’s work, tracing ten centuries in the life of the eastern half of the empire, whose capital city was Constantinople. Among the many figures who stride across Gibbon’s stage here are the emperor Justinian I, a noble statesman and successful warrior, brought low by his lascivious wife, the former prostitute Theodora; the murdering Basil I, a peasant who nonetheless proved himself a worthy figure upon which to drape the purple; and the final emperor of all, Constantine XI, who died in 1453, valiantly fighting a losing battle to prevent the Turks from gaining a city they had craved for centuries. It is still the work that sets the standard for all histories of the period.

Philip Madoc’s extensive theatre work includes the roles of Othello and Iago, Faust and Macbeth and recently, with the RSC, The Duke in *Measure for Measure* and Professor Raat in *The Blue Angel*. TV roles include Lloyd George, Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans* and the defence lawyer in *Brookside*. He also stars in his own detective series, *A Mind to Kill*. He also reads *The Death of Arthur*, *The Canterbury Tales* and *The Arabian Nights* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Neville Jason also reads Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* and Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* for Naxos AudioBooks.