

## Transcript:

The story of ancient Rome is a story of evolution -- of how a civilization's ability to adapt and dominate can lead to its survival for over a thousand years.

Rome began as a small village on central Italy's Tiber River. In the coming centuries, it grew into an empire that stretched from the north Atlantic all the way to the Persian Gulf.

During this transformation, Rome displayed a political, military, and cultural **proress** that enabled it to become a superpower and helped shape what would become known as "Western civilization".

The lifespan of ancient Rome can be divided into three major periods: the regal, the Republican, and the imperial.

During the regal period, Rome was monarchical and ruled by a succession of about seven kings.

Rome's first king, according to legend, was a man named Romulus. He and his twin brother Remus are said to have founded Rome in 753 B.C.

In 509 B.C., Rome adopted a republican system of governance in which the state was primarily ruled by two annually elected representatives called praetors (who were later called consuls). One of them became a famous general and dictator: Julius Caesar.

The imperial period followed. It was characterized by the rise of the Roman Empire and notorious leaders such as Octavian, Rome's first emperor, who ushered in an era of peace and Nero, who, some scholars believe, was Rome's cruelest emperor.

Rome's focus and pride in its military was vital to the civilization's growth, and this **ethos** was evident as early as the regal period, when Rome was only a small village.

Still, Rome slowly conquered and annexed neighbouring peoples. This slow and steady expansion eventually led to the Romans' domination of the Italian peninsula.

Their reach later stretched around the entire Mediterranean Sea, where they conquered the Greeks, Egyptians, and Carthaginians. Military conquests would later help Rome conquer lands as far away as Britain and Iraq.

This massive scale and growing populace necessitated advancements in Roman engineering. Aqueducts were

constructed, which increased the public's access to water, helped improve public health, and gave way for Rome's famed bath houses.

A 50,000-mile long road system was built as well; while made originally for the military, it facilitated the movement of people and ideas throughout the empire.

This transmission of ideas and increased contact with diverse cultures caused other aspects of Roman culture to evolve as well.

A key to Rome's success and longevity was the empire's inclusion of cultures from the lands they conquered.

From the nearby land of Latium, Rome acquired the Latin language, which became the empire's official language and the ancestor to Europe's Romance languages.

Romans also adopted cultural aspects from the ancient state of Etruria, including their religion, alphabet, and the spectacle of gladiator combat.

However, no other civilization influenced the Romans as much as the ancient Greeks. Their influence is probably most apparent in Rome's art and architecture. Upper-class Romans commissioned paintings and sculptures to imitate Greek art. Greek architectural styles, such as columns, were implemented in Roman structures, such as the Pantheon and the Colosseum.

One cultural shift in particular that resonated throughout the empire was the rise of Christianity. Originating in the Middle East, the religion found a strong advocate in Constantine I, the first Roman emperor to convert to Christianity. He enabled Rome's transition into a Christian state and encouraged the religion to spread across Europe.

By the 4th century, after a lifespan of over a millennium, the Roman Empire declined.

Factors including political corruption, economic crises, and class conflict led to the empire's decay from within, while invasions and other military threats caused it to break down from outside.

Rome's ability to incorporate diverse cultures, dominate rivals, and adapt political systems to the needs of its people are all lessons to be learned for time eternal.