

# Aurelian: Restoring Rome's Glory in the Third Century

In the tumultuous era known as the Crisis of the Third Century, the Roman Empire teetered on the brink of collapse. Barbarian invasions, civil wars, and economic instability plagued the empire, threatening its very existence.



## Aurelian; or, Rome in the Third Century by William Ware

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In this time of crisis, emerged a remarkable figure who would not only restore order to the empire but also leave an enduring legacy that would shape Rome's future: Emperor Aurelian.

## Early Life and Rise to Power

Aurelian was born in Sirmium, Pannonia (modern-day Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia) around 214 CE. Little is known about his early life, but he rose through the ranks of the Roman military, distinguishing himself as a skilled general.

In 270 CE, following the death of Emperor Claudius II, Aurelian emerged as the victor in a brief civil war and ascended to the throne.

## **Military Victories**

Aurelian's reign was marked by a series of decisive military victories that restored stability to the empire. Facing overwhelming threats on all fronts, Aurelian embarked on a campaign to reconquer lost territories and secure the empire's borders.

In 271 CE, he defeated the Alamanni, a German tribe that had invaded Italy, and then turned to the East to confront the Palmyrene Empire, which had declared independence. After a long and bloody siege, Aurelian captured Palmyra and its queen, Zenobia.

In 274 CE, Aurelian launched an ambitious invasion of the Gallic Empire, which had broken away from Rome. After a series of battles, he defeated the Gallic emperor, Tetricus, and returned Gaul to the empire.

## **Aurelian's Wall**

One of Aurelian's greatest legacies is the Aurelian Wall, an impressive fortification that encircled the city of Rome. Built to protect the city from future invasions, the wall was a masterpiece of military architecture.

Spanning over 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) in length, the Aurelian Wall featured massive walls up to 10 meters (32 feet) high and 4 meters (13 feet) thick. It had towers, gates, and fortified bridges, making it one of the most imposing fortifications in the world.

## **Temple of the Sun**

In addition to his military achievements, Aurelian was also a patron of the arts and architecture. He commissioned the construction of the Temple of the Sun, a magnificent temple dedicated to the sun god Sol Invictus (Unconquered Sun).

The Temple of the Sun was a vast complex that featured a monumental statue of Apollo, the Roman sun god. Its halls were adorned with gilded statues, marble columns, and intricate mosaics, making it one of the most opulent temples in Rome.

### **Restitutor Orbis**

For his military victories and architectural accomplishments, Aurelian was hailed as "Restitutor Orbis" (Restorer of the World). He restored order to the empire, expanded its borders, and left behind a lasting legacy that would endure for centuries.

Aurelian's reign marked a turning point in Roman history. He ended the Crisis of the Third Century and paved the way for the empire's resurgence under the Tetrarchy, a new system of government that divided the empire into four regions.

Although Aurelian's reign was cut short when he was assassinated in 275 CE, his legacy lived on. His military victories and architectural achievements secured Rome's future and inspired generations to come.

Emperor Aurelian was a pivotal figure in Roman history. As a skilled general and a visionary leader, he restored order to the empire, expanded its borders, and left behind a lasting legacy that would shape Rome's future.

His military victories ensured the empire's survival, while his architectural achievements, such as the Aurelian Wall and the Temple of the Sun, remain testaments to his greatness. Aurelian's reputation as the "Restorer of the World" was well-deserved, and he is rightly remembered as one of the greatest emperors in Roman history.



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