



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 45, the Battles of Constantine, 4 of 4: Chrysopolis

(Wikipedia)

CHRYSOPOLIS

The Battle of Chrysopolis was fought on 18 September 324. The battle was the final encounter between the two emperors. After his navy's defeat in the Battle of the Hellespont, Licinius withdrew his forces from the city of Byzantium across the Bosphorus to Chalcedon in Bithynia. Constantine followed, and won the subsequent battle. This left Constantine as the sole emperor, ending the period of the Tetrarchy.

Background

The navy of Licinius had suffered a catastrophic defeat at the Battle of the Hellespont. Following his naval victory at the Hellespont, Constantine crossed over to Asia Minor. He used a flotilla of light transports he had ordered to be built on the Bosphorus in order to avoid the enemy army, which, under the command of Licinius' newly appointed co-emperor Martinian, was guarding the coast at Lampsacus on the Hellespont.

Following the destruction of his naval forces Licinius evacuated the garrison of Byzantium, which joined his main army in Chalcedon on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus. From there he also summoned Martinian's forces and a band of Visigothic auxiliaries, under their leader Aliquaca to reinforce his principal army which had been depleted by its earlier defeat at the Battle of Adrianople.

It is not clear whether Martinian's forces reached Licinius before September 18 when Licinius was brought to battle by Constantine.

The Battle

Constantine's army landed on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus at a place called the Sacred Promontory and marched southward towards Chalcedon. Licinius moved his army a few miles north towards Chrysopolis. Constantine's army reached the environs of Chrysopolis before the forces of Licinius.

Following a retreat to his tent to seek divine guidance, Constantine decided to take the initiative.

The religious aspect of the conflict was reflected in Licinius drawing up his battle lines with images of the pagan gods of Rome prominently displayed, whilst Constantine's army fought under his talismanic Christian standard, the Labarum. Licinius had developed a superstitious dread of the Labarum and forbade his troops from attacking it, or even looking directly at it.

Constantine seemingly eschewed any subtlety of manoeuvre; he launched a single massive frontal assault on Licinius' troops and routed them. He won a decisive victory in what was a very large-scale battle. According to the historian Zosimus:

"There was great slaughter at Chrysopolis. Licinius was reported to have lost 25,000 to 30,000 dead, with thousands more breaking and running in flight. Licinius managed to escape and gathered around 30,000 of his surviving troops at the city of Nicomedia.

Recognising that his surviving forces in Nicomedia could not stand against Constantine's victorious army, Licinius was persuaded to throw himself on the mercy of his enemy.

Constantia, Constantine's half-sister and Licinius' wife, acted as intermediary. Initially, yielding to the pleas of his sister, Constantine spared the life of his brother-in-law, but some months later he ordered his execution, thereby breaking his solemn oath. Licinius was suspected of treasonable actions and the army command pressed for his execution. A year later, Constantine's nephew the younger Licinius also fell victim to the emperor's anger or suspicions.

In defeating his last foe, Licinius, Constantine became the sole emperor of the Roman Empire; the first such since the elevation of Maximian to the status of Augustus by Diocletian in April 286.

