



the murder of julius caesar

The Assassination of Julius Caesar was the result of a conspiracy of a group of senators, led by Gaius Cassius Longinus and Marcus Junius Brutus. According to some ancient biographers, the tension with the Senate, and Caesar's possible claims to the title of king are the principal motives for his assassination. The conspirators killed Caesar on the Ides of March (March 15) in 44 BC. His murder eventually led to a civil war which ultimately ended with Octavianus's accession to the position of Roman Emperor. The Greek historian Plutarch records that at one point, Caesar was given the title *Pater Patriae* ("Father of the Fatherland"). Then, the Senate named Caesar *dictator perpetuo* ("dictator in perpetuity"). According to Cassius Dio, in 44 BC, a senatorial delegation went to inform Caesar of the new honours they had bestowed upon him. Caesar, who was in the Temple of Venus Genetrix, instead of rising to meet them, received them while sitting. According to Dio, this was the excuse for the offended senators to plot his assassination. He wrote that a few of Caesar's supporters blamed his failure to rise on a sudden attack of diarrhoea, but his enemies did not accept this explanation because they saw him walking home unaided. Suetonius wrote that Caesar failed to rise in the temple either because he was restrained by Cornelius Balbus, or that he hesitated at the suggestion he should rise. The same historian also stated that a crowd assembled to greet Caesar upon his return to Rome. A member of the crowd placed a laurel wreath on the statue of Caesar on the Rostra. The tribunes Gaius Epidius Marcellus and Lucius Caesetius Flavius ordered that the wreath be removed, as it was a symbol of Jupiter and royalty. Then, Caesar had the tribunes removed from office through his official powers. According to Suetonius, he was unable to dissociate himself from the royal title from this point forward. Suetonius also tells that a crowd called him "rex", the Latin word for king. Caesar replied, "I am Caesar, not Rex". Also, at the festival of the Lupercalia, while giving a speech from the Rostra, Mark Antony, who had been elected co-consul with Caesar, attempted several times to place a crown on his head. Caesar put it aside to use it as a sacrifice to Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Suetonius adds that since Caesar intended to invade Parthia, Lucius Cotta proposed to the Senate to grant Caesar the title of "king", for it was prophesied that only a king would conquer this land. Since he had planned to leave for the East in the latter half of March, the conspirators were forced to hasten their preparations. On the Ides of March (March 15th) of 44 BC, Caesar was due to appear at a session of the Senate. Mark Antony, having vaguely learned of the plot the night before, went to head Caesar off at the steps of the Forum. However, the group of conspirators intercepted Caesar just as he was passing the Theatre of Pompey, located in the Campus Martius, and directed him to a room adjoining the east portico. According to Plutarch, as Caesar arrived at the Senate, Tillius Cimber presented him with a petition to recall his exiled brother. The other conspirators crowded round to offer their support. Both Plutarch and Suetonius say that Caesar waved him away, but Cimber grabbed his shoulders and pulled down Caesar's tunic. Caesar then cried to Cimber, "Why, this is violence!" ("Ista quidem vis est!"). At the same time, the aforementioned Casca stabbed on the neck. Caesar turned around quickly and caught Casca by the arm. According to Plutarch, he said in Latin, "Casca, you villain, what are you doing?" Casca, frightened, shouted and within moments the entire group, including Brutus, started striking out at the dictator. Caesar attempted to get away, but, blinded by blood, tripped and fell; the men continued stabbing him as he lay defenceless on the lower steps of the portico. He was stabbed 23 times. According to Suetonius, a physician later established that only one wound, the second one to his chest, had been lethal. The dictator's last words are not known with certainty, and are a contested subject among historians. Suetonius reports that others said that Caesar's last words were the Greek phrase "καὶ σύ, τέκνον;" (transliterated as "Kai su, teknon?": "You too, son?"). However, Suetonius himself claims that Caesar said nothing. Plutarch too reports that Caesar said nothing, pulling his toga over his head when he saw Brutus among the conspirators. Brutus being the son of Caesar's long-time favorite lover, Servilia. His funeral occurred a few days later. Caesar's body was carried to the Forum, because all state funerals occurred there and a wax statue of Caesar displaying the 23 stab wounds was erected there. His murderers will be killed within few years after their crime. Some, like Brutus, committed suicide. Caesar's murder marked the end of the old Republic and the evolution into a new form of government: the empire.