

THIS CLIP DEPICTS THE LIFE OF NERO, A ROMAN EMPEROR, AND CONTAINS RE-ENACTMENTS OF REAL PEOPLE AND REAL EVENTS. THESE EVENTS MAY BE DISTURBING TO SOME PEOPLE. VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

Nero became the Emperor of Rome in 54 AD. Dressed in various disguises, he spent more time among the people of Rome than most of its citizens realized.

Unfortunately, Nero was losing his mind. The consequences of his condition brought the Roman Empire to the brink of disaster.

Events depicted in this clip take place in 64 AD. Nero was at his seaside villa, in Antium - known as Anzio today - when he saw the orange tinge of fire along the skyline. Rome - about thirty-five miles north of Antium - was on fire.

Wooden buildings in the city, closely positioned along narrow streets, fed the fire. With a seemingly endless supply of fuel, the inferno created a desperate situation. Rome burned for six days.

Evidence, from some ancient writers, reveals that Nero returned to the city and did all he could to help. According to those records, the Emperor opened his private gardens to keep people safe.

Damage to the city was extraordinary, rendering about 500,000 people homeless. Since so much of the capital was in ruins, some wondered whether enough of the city remained to justify keeping Rome as the empire's capital.

Nero, on his own, could not make a decision. It seemed as though the fire had removed his ability to be an effective leader. His senior advisers - such as Seneca - urged him to act decisively.

Pondering what to do, Nero had an idea. Rome would remain the capital, but he would take advantage of the fire's destruction to start again. The city had to be rebuilt - why not make it truly magnificent?

Nero envisioned a new Rome made of marble and stone, instead of wood. Wide roads, forums, temples, art and other beautiful things would feature most prominently.

This, the Emperor believed, was a project people would understand and support. Nero hoped it would be the project which made him "a god" in the eyes of his subjects.

That ... at least ... was his plan.

See, also:

[Nero - Rebuilding Rome after the Fire](#)

[Nero - Plot to Kill Nero](#)

[Nero - Becoming a Madman](#)

[Nero - A Disrespected Emperor](#)

[Nero - Commits Suicide](#)

Credits:

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The BBC first broadcast this program about "Ancient Rome" on the 21st of September, 2006. To purchase the dramatized documentary series, [click here](#).

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Nero:

Michael Sheen

Poppaea Sabina:

Catherine McCormack

Tigellinus:

James Wilby

Senator Piso:

Hugh Ross

Seneca:

Hugh Dickson

Narrator:

Alisdair Simpson

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