

## Unit Six: Byzantium and Islam



# **The Church In Transition**

- **Constantine was the De Facto beginning of the union of Church and State in the Roman Empire. He called the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in 325 which settled the Arian/Catholic controversy by declaring that Jesus was true God from True God.**
- **Nicaea confirmed that the Catholic Church in the Empire was divided into Four Patriarchates; Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem and Rome. The Patriarch in Rome acted as Primus Inter Pares and also as a court of last resort.**
- **Theodosius was the De Facto beginning of the union of Church and State in the Empire. He issued the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 which declared Catholic Christianity to be the official religion of the Empire. Theodosius also called a second Council at Constantinople in 381. The Council established that the Holy Spirit was true God and appointed Constantinople as a new Patriarchate second only to Rome.**
- **The Churches governed according to the principle of subsidiarity (based on Matt. 18:15-17). Disputes were dealt with a) in the local church or b) in the local diocese or c) in the local Patriarchate. Rome was consulted only if the issue could not be resolved within these more local regions. Appeals could also be made to Rome.**
- **There were three ordained levels of hierarchy within the Church; Bishop (Episcopos), Priest (Presbyteros) and Deacon (Diakonos) . The prefix Arch- could be placed if there were more than one person within a local church within a level who had leadership responsibility of that local level (e.g. Archbishop)**

# **The Church In Transition**

- **Most of the heresies within early Christianity arose in the East. No surprise there. That is where most of the Christians lived.**
- **Most heresies revolved around two key issues: 1) The Triune nature of God (modalism) and 2) the union of a fully humans and fully divine nature in the person of Jesus. Arianism denied that Jesus was true God. Monophysitism and Monotheletism denied that Jesus was true human.**
- **The first real heresy in the West was a big one and differed in nature from the heresies in the East. A British Monk named Pelagius proclaimed a different understanding of how salvation could be achieved.**
- **In response to Pelagius, the first great Doctor (Teacher) of the Church came to the fore, Augustine of Hippo.**

# Augustine of Hippo

- Born in Tagaste a Berber town in North Africa in 354 AD. His mother Monica was a Christian. His father Patricius was not.
- An excellent student, Augustine worked his way to Carthage, then Rome and then Mediolanum (Milan) where the Western Roman Imperial Court was then located. In Milan, he was mentored by Ambrose who considered Augustine to be his spiritual son.
- His mother Monica soon joined her son to Milan. She found him living with a concubine. Monica arranged an engagement to a more suitable woman. The engagement failed so Augustine took another concubine. This is when he spoke his now famous words, **“Lord, grant me chastity and continence....but not yet”**.
- In 386, at age 31, Augustine had a “Road to Damascus” moment. He heard a voice saying, **“Take up and read”**. A Bible was at hand so Augustine opened it up to a random page. He opened it up to Paul’s letter to the Romans. He read these words in Chapter 13:13-14, **“Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof”**. He and a young son Adeodatus, born to him years earlier by his concubine, were baptized by Ambrose in 387.
- Soon after the baptism, Monica, Augustine and Adeodatus set out to return to their home in North Africa. Monica died before they set sail and Adeodatus, then in his teens, died soon after their arrival. The concubine who was Adeodatus’ mother was left behind.

# Augustine's Accomplishments

- At age 36, back in Tagaste, his friends and neighbors almost forced him to accept a position as presbyter (priest) in the nearby town of Hippo. Several years later he was consecrated Bishop in that city.
- While Bishop there, Constantine had battled two other heresies, Manichaeism, yet another version of Christian Gnosticism that had even attracted Augustine as a young man and Donatism which insisted that those Christians who had publicly rejected Christ during the Roman persecutions would need to be re-baptized before they could be forgiven.
- But it was his battle with Pelagius that brought Augustine to a teaching on Original Sin that is still prevalent in Western Catholic and much of Protestant Christianity. Eastern Orthodoxy has a slightly different teaching on this issue. We will discuss that as well.
- Augustine was a prolific writer. Works that stand out are his *Confessions*, a deeply introspective look into Augustine's understanding of spirituality and his *Retractiones* (the Latin word means something more like revisions than retractions) , written later in his life, where he revisits some of his earlier ideas. Augustine is also famous for his *City of God*, which was a type of *apologia* (a defense) against Paganism.
- Augustine also wrote several works against some of the heresies of his time as well as in support of Catholic doctrine. A number of his sermons have also survived and can be found on the internet. More than a few of them are included in the Divine Office read in Catholic and some Protestant Churches in the section called Office of Readings.

# Pelagianism

- The teaching of the British Monk Pelagius quickly became the most serious heresy to be brought forth in the West. Latin had long since replaced Greek as the language of the Western Church. As a result, the Pelagian heresy remained largely a Western issue. Augustine's writings in general, and his writings on this issue in particular, weren't officially translated into Greek for several centuries after pen was put to parchment.
- Pelagius had a unique understanding of Adam's sin and its impact on humanity
  - Adam's sin affected Adam alone. Perhaps his sin did set a bad example for his descendants but that was its only effect.
  - Adam's sin did not cause death to enter the world. Adam, and all humanity die because it is natural for human beings and other things in nature to die.
  - Human nature could attain salvation on its own merits. It did not need the initial prompting of God's grace to begin the journey. **Baptism was a ritual, nothing more, and Christians underwent the ritual in obedience to Christ.**
  - The major impact of Jesus' death was that it taught selfless love and served as a counterbalance to Adam's poor example, nothing more.
  - Sinless human beings existed before Jesus (Enoch, Noah)
  - The Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount, key teachings of Jesus, were nice but **obedience to the Law of Moses (the Ten Commandments) was sufficient for salvation**

# Christian Understanding of the Impact of Adam's Sin Before Augustine

- As mentioned earlier, one of the great questions for Christianity is how could a God who is all-good allow for a world with so much evil?
- Grace can be viewed as God's free offer of his selfless love to us. Faith can be viewed as our free acceptance of that offer. Love, offered and accepted, if it is truly love, requires a completely free will. A completely free will allows for the possibility of a loving choice but also allows for the possibility of an evil choice.
- A Christian understanding of evil, is not that evil is the equal to but opposite of good. That is a Gnostic understanding. To Christians, evil is the absence of good where good should be. Evil is "the hole in the doughnut".
- In the time of Augustine, the Latin Catholic Church of the West and the Greek Catholic Church of the East still formed one, somewhat united Church. The Eastern Church believed that Adam's sin had an impact on his descendants. The Eastern Church used the term **Ancestral Sin** to describe the first sin. The impact of **Ancestral Sin weakened** the human will rendering it capable of moral choices but prone to evil choices. I am still unclear how the East understands the state of justification in the infant. Augustine added something to that.
- Augustine believed that, along with a weakened will, the human ancestors of Adam and Eve also shared in the guilt of their sin. They did not, though, share in the guilt of the sin in the way one might think. They shared in the state that Adam and Eve had found themselves in after their sin. They no longer had the holiness that God intended for them and were no longer fit for an intimate relationship with an all-Holy God. Christians that were unbaptized were equally unfit.
- Later, some forms of Protestantism would teach that Original sin did not weaken the human will making it prone to sin. Rather, Original sin completely destroyed the human will rendering it incapable of moral choices. Those distinctions continue to exist today, and I will speak more about them later in this course.

# Augustine's Response

- Adam's sin did affect all humanity both physically and spiritually.
- Human beings were not intended to experience physical death, but Adam's sin changed that.
- Salvation, requires two things: **justification** (a return to a status which allowed us to once again be able to stand in the presence of God) and **sanctification** (a soul perfectly filled with the selfless love that is shared by the Trinity, required for life in Heaven). Salvation always begins with God and is never initiated by humankind itself.
- Augustine described the impact of Adam's sin on humanity in this way.
  - The first sin (the original sin) caused Adam, Eve and all their descendants to lose their standing before God (justification).
  - The first sin (the original sin) caused Adam, Eve and all their descendants to have a will no longer tuned to the wisdom presented by God (selfless love as the means to abiding happiness) but tuned to the wisdom of the world as presented by the serpent which stressed love for self over love for God and neighbor.
  - All descendants of Adam and Eve were affected by Adam's Sin, so every human being was born with a soul that lacked both justification and sanctity. Each human being was born unfit for Heaven. (based on Matt. 5:48 and Rev. 21:27)
  - As a result of the previous point, the need for infant baptism became far more important in Western Christianity than in the East. Eastern Catholics still baptized infants but for different reasons. As one Orthodox priest put it, "You don't wait for a child to get sick before vaccinating him. You shouldn't wait for a child to experience sin before vaccinating him with the Holy Spirit".



# Augustine and Catholic Christianity

- Augustine's teaching regarding Original Sin had little effect on Eastern Christianity, Augustine himself was nonetheless recognized by both East and West as a Doctor (important teacher) of the church. Augustine's teachings and writings had two serious impacts in the West.
- **On Baptism:** East and West agreed that Baptism allowed the Holy Spirit to enter the soul of the new Christian. The East differed from Augustine on the impact of Adam's sin. In the West, infant Baptism ceased being an option and became almost a requirement. No soul could possibly share eternity with God while still lacking the holiness sufficient for life in Heaven. This quickly raised the question of what happened to a child's soul who died unbaptized. This question created a series of speculative answers including the famous Limbo. In 2007 the Catholic Church issued a document called *The Hope Of Salvation For Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized*. This document stated that it was not unreasonable to hope for the mercy of God to provide salvation in such cases
- **On Free Will:** Augustine was a vague on the subject of free will not unlike Paul on the topic of the Law. In Augustine's works, you could find examples that support the idea that Augustine believed in Double Predestination (God knows and causes the eternal fate of all humans). There are other examples that seem to point to Augustine's belief in Single (or Simple) Predestination (God knows but is not the cause of the salvation of all humans).
- Augustine's teachings about Baptism and free will became the standard in Western Christianity. They became controversial in Western Christianity during the Reformation.

# Original Sin In Our Time

Faith	Name of Adam's Sin	Humanity shared in Adam's Sin	State of the Human Will after Adam's Sin
Eastern Orthodox	Ancestral Sin	No	Addicted to seeking happiness by following the world but capable of cooperating with the regeneration of Baptism
Roman Catholic	Original Sin	Yes	Addicted to seeking happiness by following the world but capable of cooperating with the regeneration of Baptism
Many (not all) Protestants	Original Sin	Yes	The human will is depraved, incapable of any moral act. Faith in Jesus brings the gift of the Holy Spirit. Morality is the act of the indwelling of that Spirit since the human will can not cooperate. Baptism is only symbolic.

## **Christianity After The Union of Church and State**

- The combination of the Christian faith with the Roman state was not the first such union. Armenia had declared itself a Christian nation at the turn of the fourth century, around 303 CE. The impact of the Roman union in 380 CE affected far more people.

### **Positive Impacts:**

- 1) Christianity grew in numbers far more quickly than it ever had.
- 2) Christian worship could now take place in public.
- 3) Christian concerns for the well-being of one's neighbor could now be shared by the structure of Government

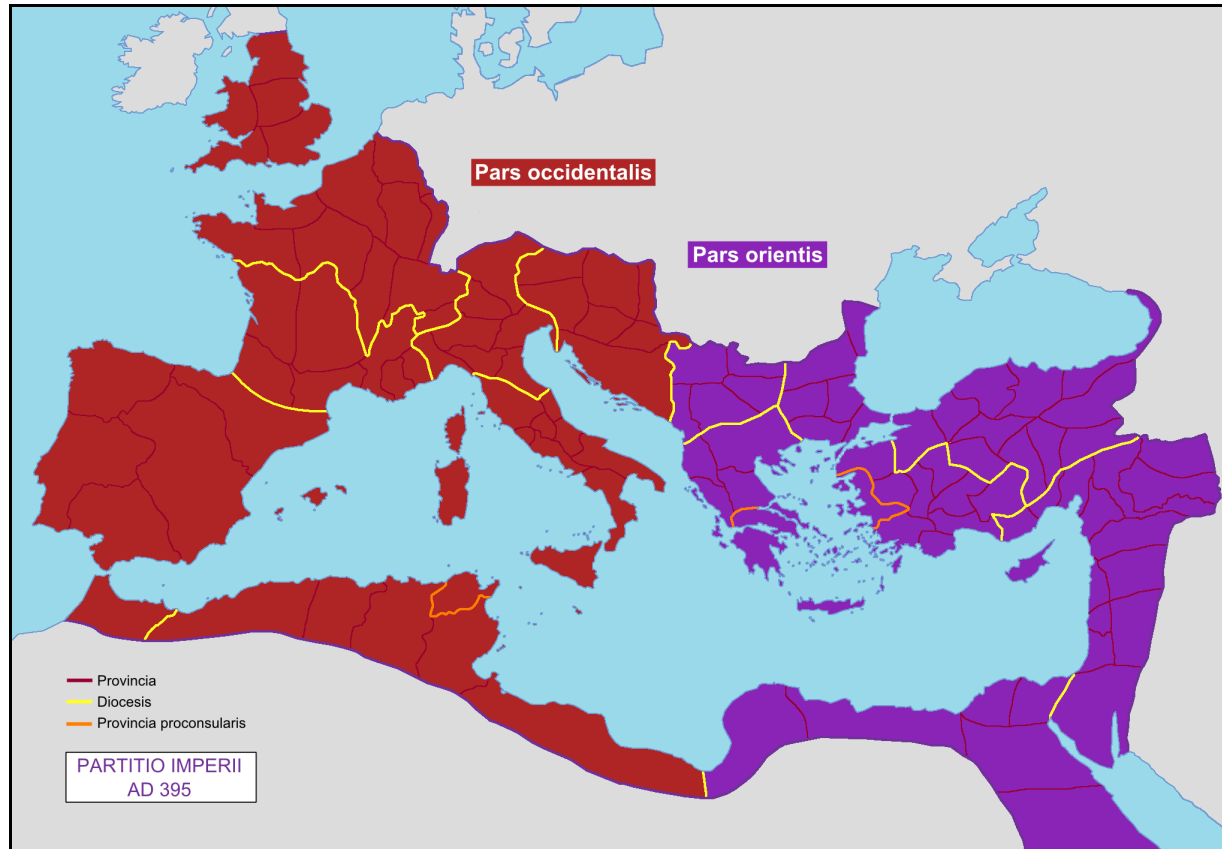
### **Negative Impacts:**

- 1) Christian growth even before the union of Church and State was so rapid that Bishops were forced to share their priestly office (presiding over the eucharist) with their presbyters (the English word priest derives from the Greek word presbyter) The union made things even worse. Catechizing all the new converts overwhelmed the resources at hand. There were more Christians, yes, but the new converts knew less about their faith.
- 2) Christian worship could now take place in public. That was great but Christian Churches before the union were relatively small. More and larger church buildings were needed.
- 3) Loving and caring for one's neighbor was a key aspect of early Christianity. Handing that task off to government depersonalized this key moral value lessening the beneficial nature of such selflessness on both the giver and the receiver.

# **The Roots of Division**

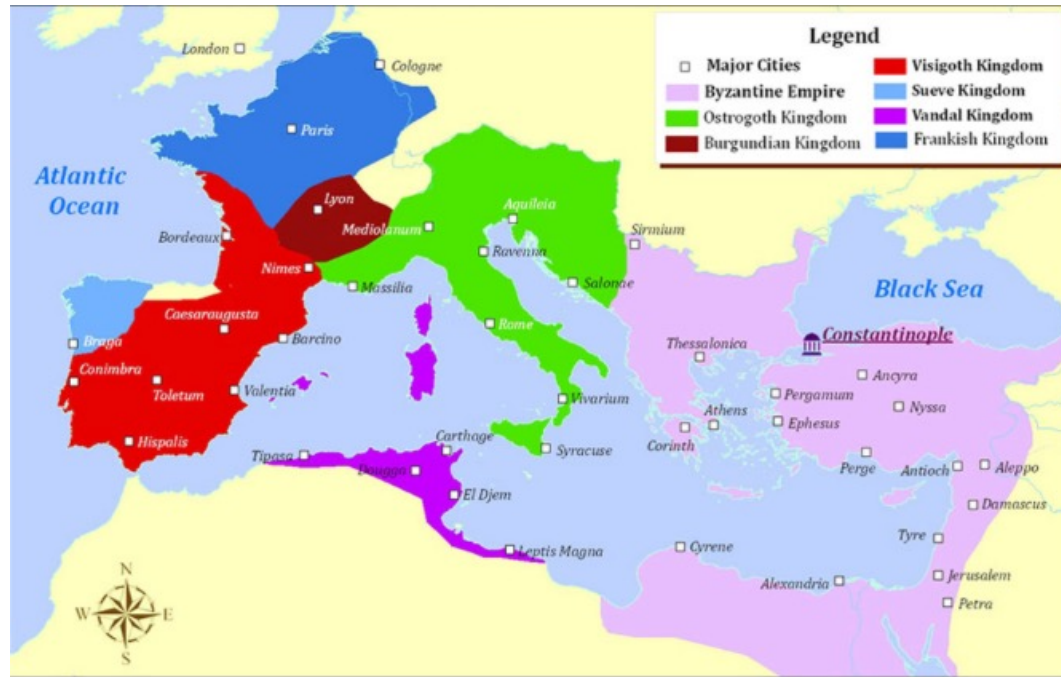
- **Eastern and Western Catholic Christianity remained officially united until 1054. The first step that led to their division began when Constantine moved his Capital City from Rome to Constantinople. The East was growing strong. The West, including Rome was beginning its decline that led to the loss of Empire and several centuries of life in what came to be called The Dark Ages**
- **After Constantine moves East, the seat of government in the West moved out of Rome. It first moved to Mediolanum (Milan) during the time of Augustine and later to Ravenna. This is why a Roman Bishop, and not a Roman General, met Atilla when he came knocking at Rome's door.**
- **The Emperors in the East felt that they were the true heads of both Church and State. Patriarchs in Constantinople served at the pleasure of the Emperor. Emperor Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup> century issued three anathemas and threatened the Bishop of Rome with military force if he did not sign off on them (The Three Chapters Affair). It was bad enough for a political leader (the Emperor) to issue anathemas. Forcing them on Patriarchs made it even worse.**
- **Eastern Emperor Leo III began his own heresy. the Iconoclastic heresy in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century. He fired his Patriarch Germanus when Germanus objected. Leo III also ordered the Bishop of Rome to remove all imagery from Churches in the West. When the Bishop of Rome (Gregory II and later Gregory III) refused, Leo had Gregory's legate imprisoned when he delivered Gregory's letter of refusal.**
- **The East and the West spoke different languages. In the first years of Christianity, even Western writers like Irenaeus of Lyon in Gaul wrote in Greek. Over time, the West started to move more and more to Latin. This made communication of ideas difficult. Eastern and Western culture, art and music were also different.**
- **It is more surprising to me that it took until 1054 for the break between East and West to become official.**

# The Roman Empire After Theodosius (395 CE)



By the time that Christianity was declared the only *religio licita* in the empire, the Eastern Empire was ruled from Constantinople. The Imperial court of the Western Empire was no longer in Rome but had moved first to Mediolanum (Milan) and then to Ravenna. The city of Rome diminished in political and military importance. Nonetheless, it was the Patriarchal city of the West and its Bishop the *primus inter pares* of Christianity's other patriarchal bishops.

# The Roman Empire After the Gothic Invasions



In less than 100 years, Catholic Christianity (following the Creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople declaring that Father, Son and Spirit were all persons in a single godhead and that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine) no longer dominated in the Western Empire. Germanic tribes that were either pagan or were converted to Arianism (Jesus was not fully divine) while in the East, took over much of the Western Empire. Catholic Christianity in Rome was allowed some degree of freedom, but the Vandals and the Visigoths in Spain and North Africa were less accommodating. The Eastern Empire remained Catholic. Antioch in Syria and Alexandria in Egypt became great centers of Christian learning and remained so until the Rise of Islam

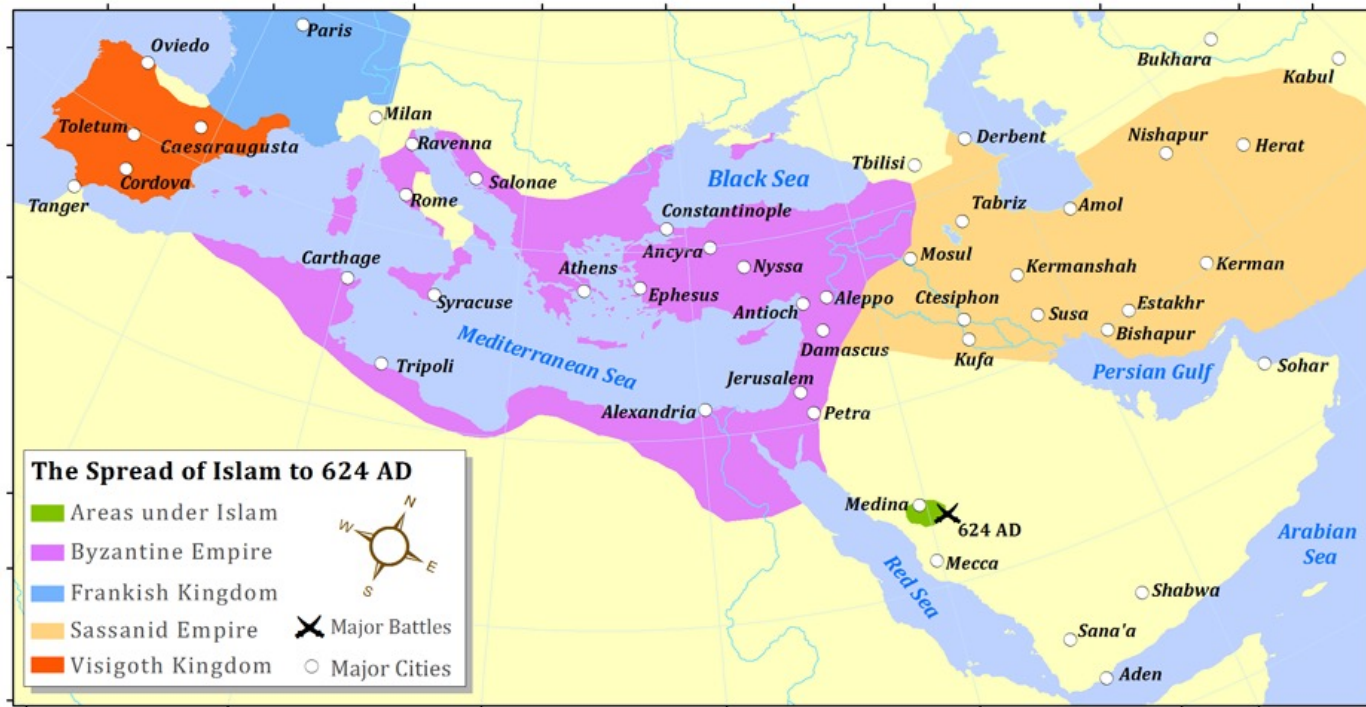


# The Roman Empire Under Justinian



Under Justinian, the Roman Empire briefly regained control over the Italian peninsula, the North African regions where they subjected the Arian Vandals and restored the official religion of the Empire. The Empire also managed to take the southern tip of Spain back from the Visigoths. This restored control of the Straits of Gibraltar. Less than a century later, all of the Mediterranean Basin would undergo a sudden and immense change.

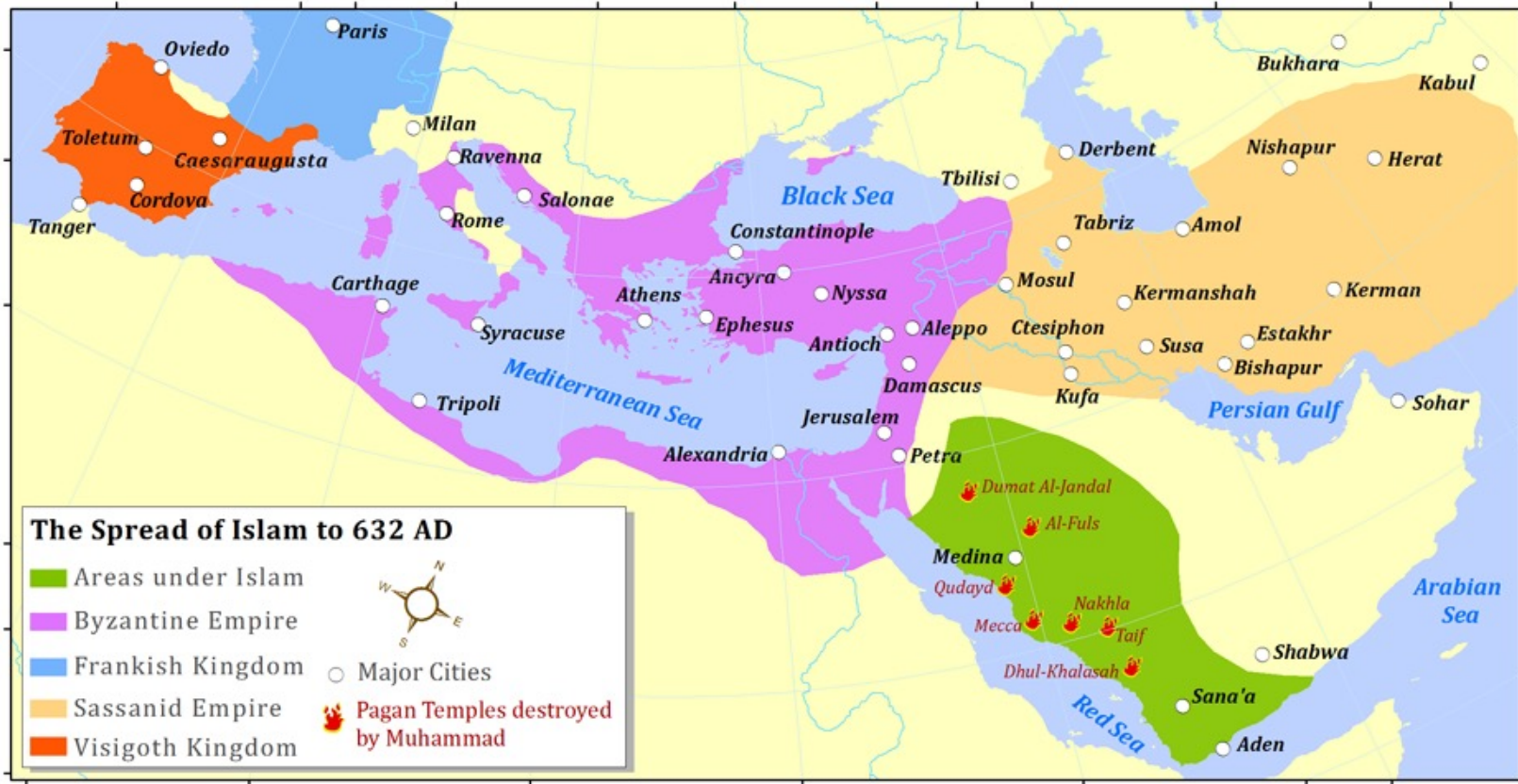
# The Rise of Islam: 624 CE



Less than a century after Justinian, the Empire had lost Spain and major portions of Italy. Sassanid Persians were constantly battling the Empire in the East. Meanwhile, around 610 CE, in the barren regions of Arabia, a merchant named Mohammed claimed that the angel Gabriel appeared to him and commanded him to recite verses. These verses were later to become part of the Qu'ran. Mohammed began to preach his teachings in Mecca around 613 CE. In 620 CE Mohammed was asked to travel to Medina to settle a local dispute. He and his fellow followers managed to control a small region around the town of Medina. Four years later, they raided his hometown of Mecca.

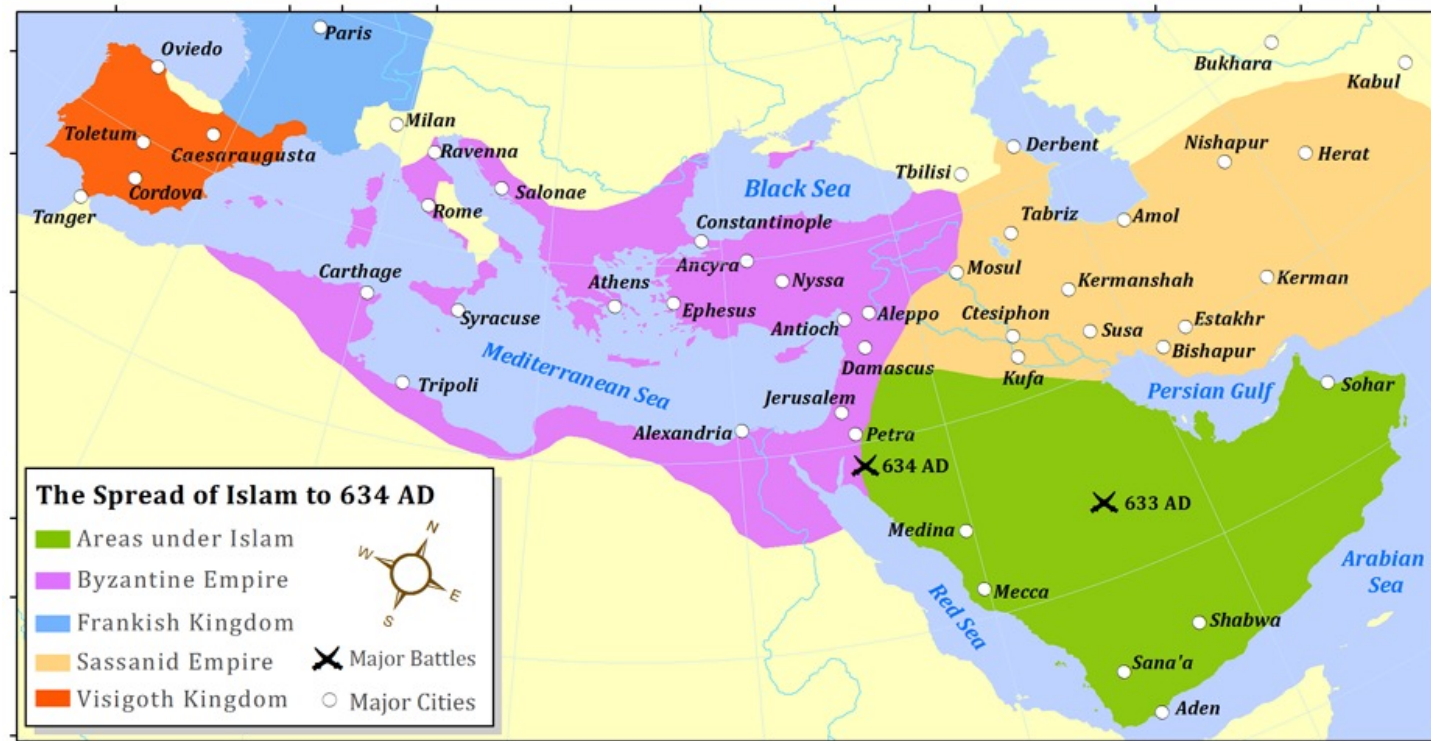


# The Rise of Islam: 632 CE



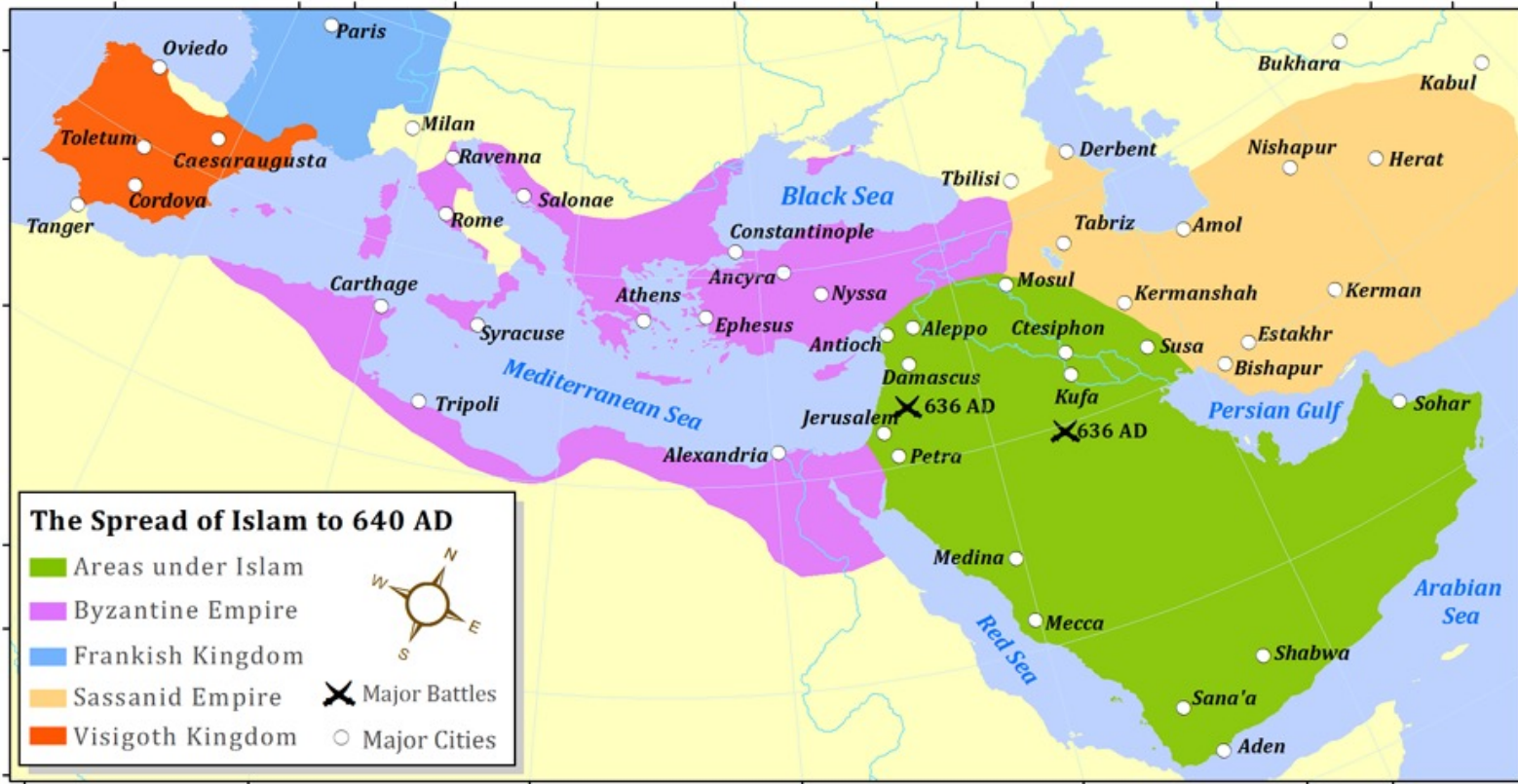
By 632 CE, Mohammed had defeated Mecca and many of the lands located in what we now call the Arabian peninsula. On June 8, 632 CE, Mohammed died at an age of 62 or 63 years.

# The Rise of Islam: 634 CE



Mohammed had two sons who had died in their infancy. When Mohammed died, there was a dispute as to who should be his successor (caliph). Some claimed that Mohammed had not designated a successor. Supported by Omar, a companion of Mohammed, his followers selected Abu Bakr, Mohammed's father-in-law, as the first caliph. Others claimed that Mohammed had indeed named a caliph. Ali, his cousin and son-in-law, was supposed to succeed him. This division remains a part of Islam today.

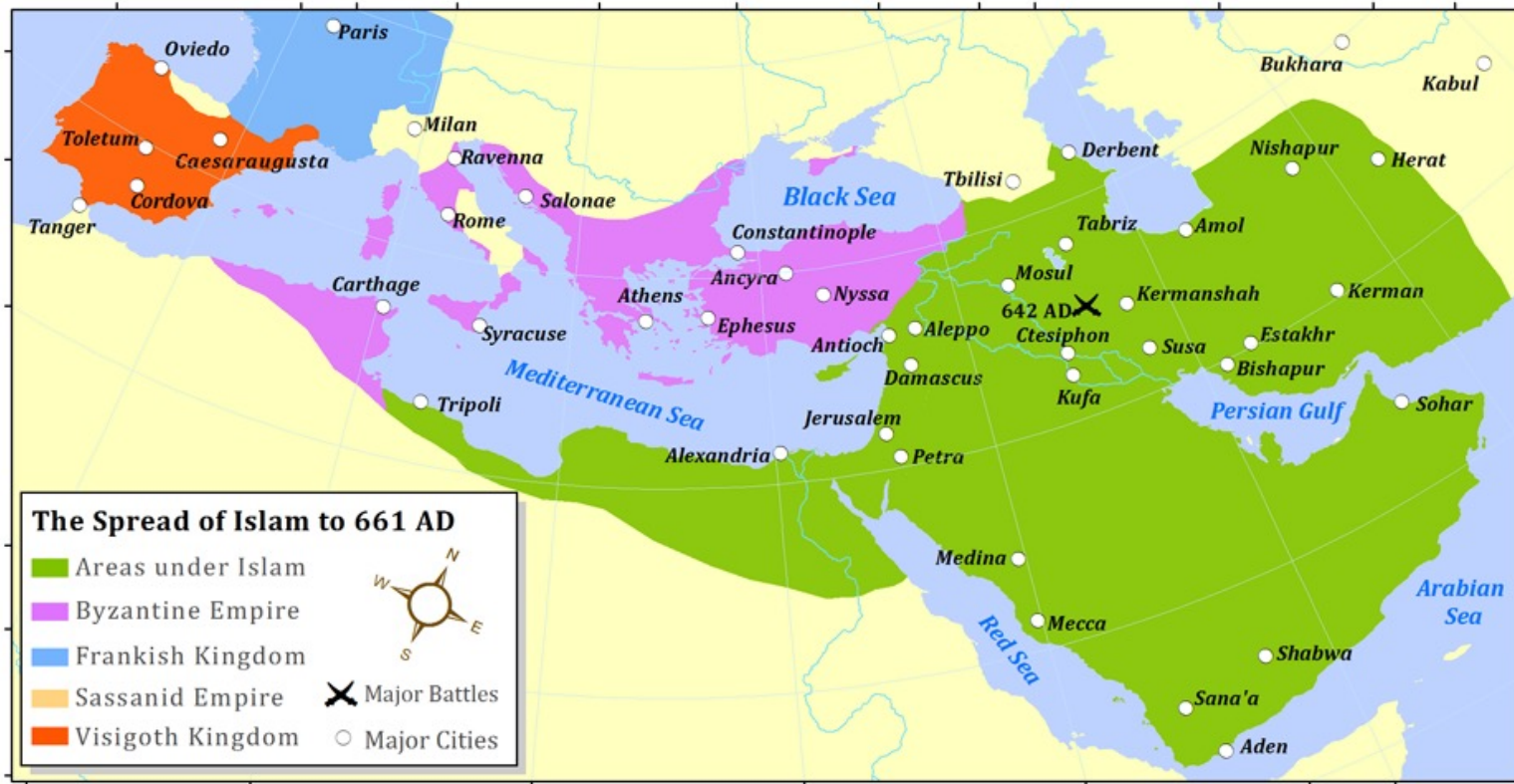
# The Rise of Islam: 640 CE



Abu Bakr died of an illness after ruling as Caliph for only 27 months. Ali was again passed over in favor of Omar. Omar proved to be a very effective military leader. By 640 CE, Omar had successfully captured lands from the Sassanid Persian Empire as well as from the Byzantine Romans. Major Christian cities such as Jerusalem, Antioch and Damascus became Islamic centers. By 644 CE, Omar had managed to sweep through today's Iraq and Iran and down even to the Punjab. Omar died in that same year.

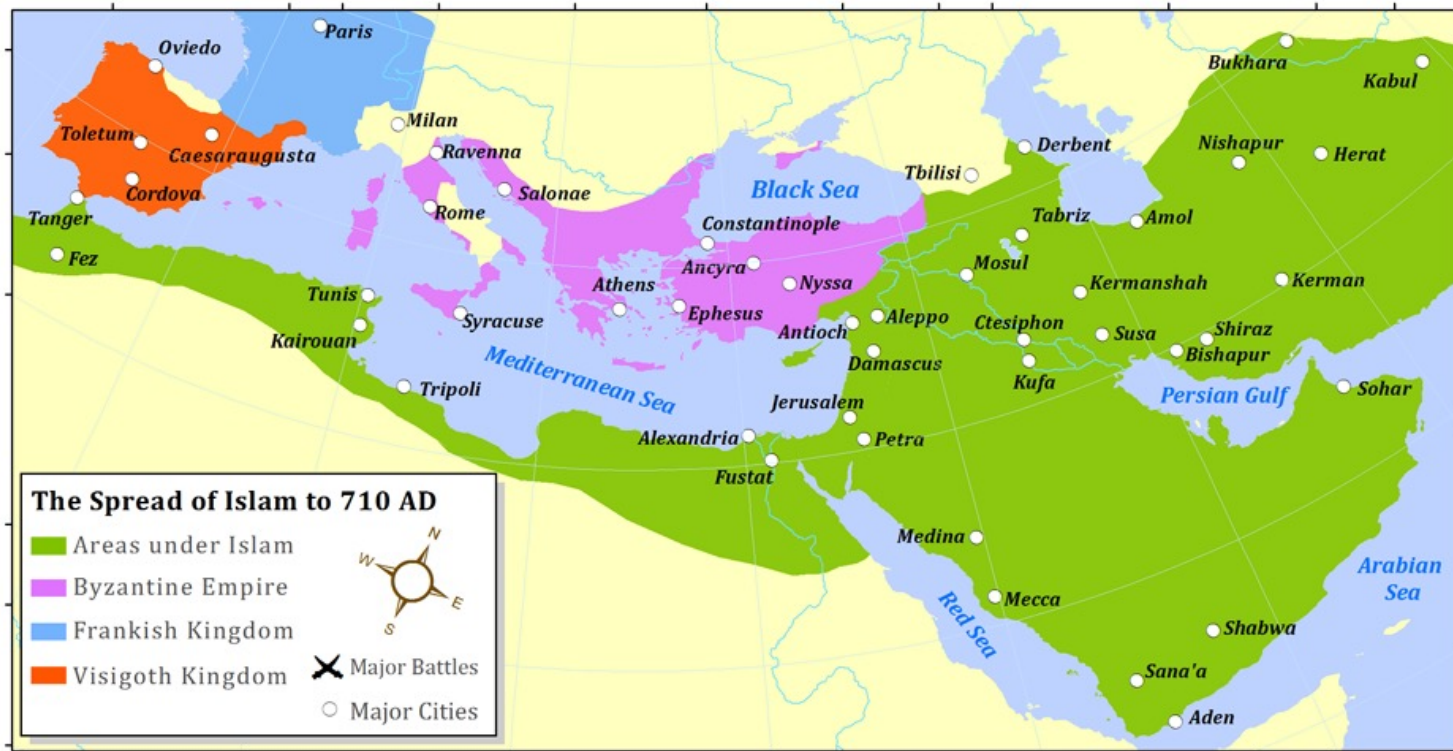


# The Rise of Islam: 661 CE



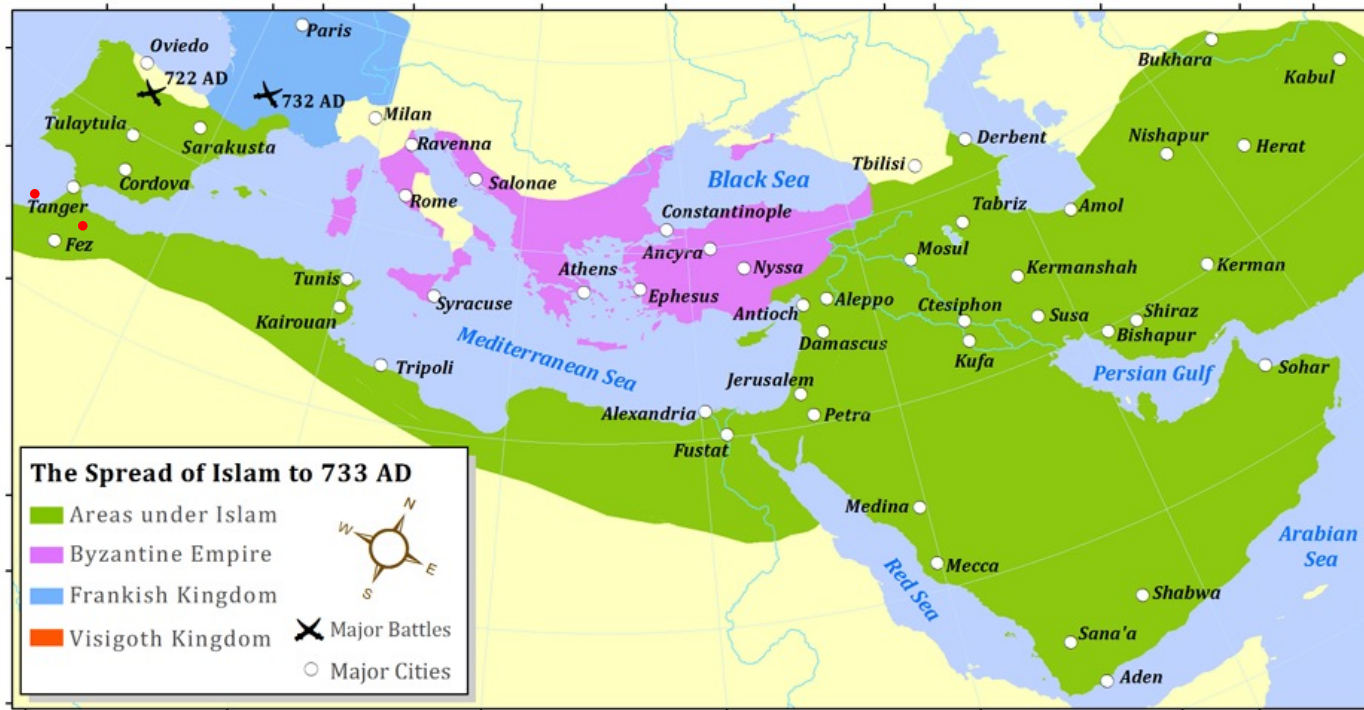
Omar was replaced by Uthman in 644. He ruled until 656. Ali was finally named Caliph in 656 and ruled until 661. By 661 CE, the portion of North Africa controlled by the Byzantines (Eastern Roman Empire) fell to Islam. Another center of Christian learning, Alexandria in Egypt came under Islamic control. Ali was the last of the Rashdun (Rightly Guided) Caliphs. They are sometimes called the Rashdun Dynasty, but they were not a true dynasty. In 661, Mu'awiya, the Governor of the Syrian region, seized power and became the first Caliph of the Umayyad Dynasty

# The Rise of Islam: 710 CE



Control of the Western portion of North Africa, once the bread-basket of the Roman Empire, had fallen to the control of the Germanic tribe called Vandals during the fourth century. The Vandals were Arian Christians. In the sixth century, Justinian and his generals recaptured those lands and placed them under the political authority of the Roman Empire and the religious authority of Catholic Christianity. The Romans were never loved during their second stay in the region due to heavy taxation needed to pay their troops. When the Islamic invaders arrived, many inhabitants saw them as saviors. By 710, this region succumbed to the Islamic tide.

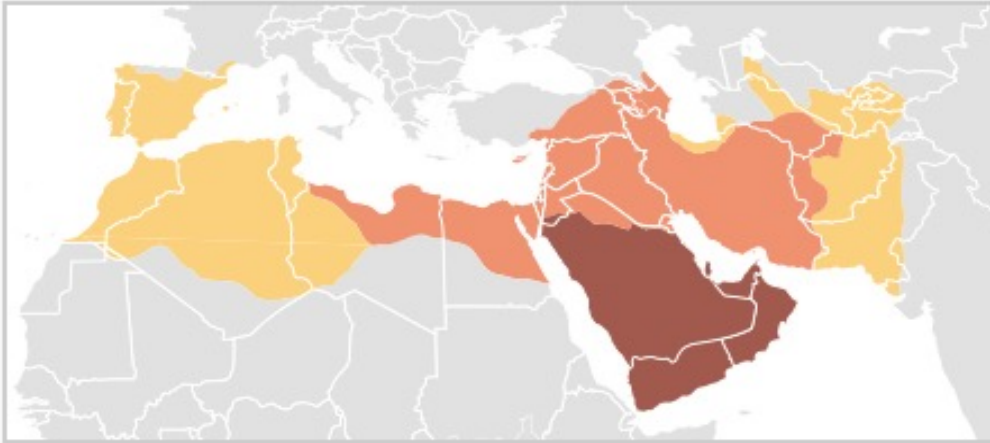
# The Rise of Islam: 733 CE




By 733 CE, the Umayyad rulers conquered almost all of the Iberian peninsula. In 732 CE, the Islamic tide was finally held in check at the Battle of Poitiers (Tours). Greatly outnumbered by the Muslim armies, Charles Martel, a Frank and the grandfather of Charlemagne, took advantage of two assets that the Muslim armies had not previously encountered. The Muslim armies used their light cavalry to sweep across the open desert of North Africa. The battlefield at Poitiers was restricted in size. The Frankish army also had a force of heavy cavalry that the Muslim armies had not previously encountered. In battles on open fields, heavy cavalry was not very useful but, in more confined environments, it proved to be very effective. The Muslim armies retreated to Spain and never again seriously threatened Europe from the West.





# Mohammed and the First Two Caliphates



Expansion of the caliphate under the Umayyads: 

 Expansion under Muhammad, 622–632

 Expansion during the Rashidun Caliphate, 632–661

 Expansion during the Umayyad Caliphate, 661–750

**Note: the Rashidun Caliphate included the first four caliphs, Abu-Bakr, Omar, Uthman (even though he was of the Umayyad clan, he did not establish a dynasty) and Ali. The Rashidun Caliphate was not a dynasty.**

# **RashdunUmayyads and Abbasids**

## **Rashdun**

- **The capital city of Islam was Medina.**
- **Ali moved the capital from Medina to Kufa.**

## **Umayyad**

- **Moved the Capital City from Kufa to Damascus**
- **Ruled from 661 to 750**
- **Overthrown by the Abbasids (except for Abd al-Rahman who continued the dynasty in Spain)**

## **Abbasid**

- **Related to an uncle of Mohammed.**
- **They were supported by those still loyal to the descendants of Ali.**
- **When the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads, those supporters expected a descendant of Ali to be the new Caliph. When that didn't happen, this group separated from the Abbasids. This re-ignited the Shia/Sunni split which first appeared after the death of Mohammed.**
- **Introduced the Golden Age of Islam**
- **Moved the Capital to Baghdad**
- **Hired Persian administrators**
- **Built the House of Wisdom**
- **Made Baghdad the 'Athens of the East'**



# **The Golden Age of Islam**

- While Islam had a major negative impact on the Christian faith and Western civilization, it also accomplished a number of things that allowed both Christianity and Western Civilization to recover from the double blow of the Gothic Invasions and the Islamic expansion
- Abu al-'Abbas al-Saffah was the first Caliph of the Abbasid dynasty. He reigned from 750 to 754. The true founder of the Abbasid dynasty but his successor was so impactful that he (al-Mansur) is often considered. The first Abbasid Caliph Only Muslim Spain remained under an Umayyad Emir.
- Al-Mansur. He reigned from 754 to 775.
  - Consolidated and made manageable the gains already made
  - Like Constantine, moved the capital city East, this time to Baghdad
  - Took advantage of the expertise of the Sassanid Persian administrators
  - Established embassies with other countries and made the Abbasid Caliphate a world power
- Caliph al-Mansur died in 775. He was succeeded by two more Caliphs, but it was the third Caliph, Harun al-Rashid who built on the foundation established by al-Mansur and allowed the Golden Age of Islam to blossom.
- Al-Rashid. He reigned from 786 to 809.
  - Finished the conversion process of the Persian Administrators to Islam. These converts played a major role in compiling the Hadiths of Mohammed
  - Finished the House of Wisdom

# Al-Mansur and Al-Rashid

Mohammed may have led a religious movement, but he did so as much as a warrior as he did as a prophet. It has been said that, in their early years, both Christianity and Islam spread throughout the Mediterranean and beyond by the shedding of blood. In both cases, the blood that was shed was Christian.

Caliph al-Mansur had already shown his wisdom by realizing the need to consolidate and manage the military and political gains Islam had made during the previous century. He also showed his wisdom by moving his capital city away from the environment where assassination was a common means by which many Caliphs had been replaced. He was also not afraid to make use of the skills of Persian administrators as opposed to Arab soldiers.

Caliph al-Mansur died in 775. He was succeeded by two more Caliphs, but it was the third Caliph, Harun al-Rashid who built on the foundation established by al-Mansur and allowed the Golden Age of Islam to blossom.

Al-Mansur's consolidation of power allowed the Caliphate to interact with the rest of the world. Those interactions brought wealth and tribute from many nations. Some of that wealth was used to create and grow the House of Wisdom in Baghdad. There is some dispute over whether it was al-Mansur or al-Rashid that first established this center. There is also some dispute over whether it was created primarily as a library or whether The House of Wisdom flourished both a library and an academy. It became a great center of learning. In Baghdad, those Persian administrators so welcomed by al-Mansur had become converts to Islam. They contributed greatly to the intellectual growth of Islam during this Golden Age. It is also clear that much of the Hadith of Sunni Islam was written by scholars from among these Persian converts and their descendants.

# Faith and Reason

**During the Golden Age of Islam, learning in such things as science, philosophy and the Law were just as important as learning in the faith. In the next several slides, we will review some of the major contributors to both Islam and to the world who lived during this Golden Age.**

**For the moment, though, I want to stress a point that I made in the beginning of this class. God created humanity with an intellect capable of reasoning and a will capable of working with reason to understand God's revelation and to respond to it by faith.**

**One of the main points of this class is that the fully integrated human being is one who makes use of both of these great gifts of God, gifts given to allow human beings to live in a way to reflect the image of God, to understand love and to freely choose love.**

**If we emphasize one of these gifts to the exclusion of the other, humanity always suffers. An over-emphasis on reason brings us atheistic Communism. Many intellectuals believed that Communism was the inevitable result of the process started in the Enlightenment. Reason declared that faith was the opiate of the people and that wars of faith led to the death of millions across history. It is far worse than ironic that, in less than a century, allegedly rational atheist governments in the Soviet Union, China and Cambodia, killed an estimated 90-100 million people (apart from the deaths that were part of WWI and WWII) in that short time. Rational Communism produced more death over a shorter period of time than any faith in history.**

**Faith's dismissal of reason in the search for truth, if we are lucky, leads to the Flying Spaghetti monster. It has also led to the many wars of faith over the years that continue to this day. Closer to home, it leads to horrors such as Jonestown.**

# Reason: Islamic Contributions to Science

In the beginning, Islam was a religion in which faith and reason were both respected as means of pursuing truth, of seeing how Allah revealed himself in his creation.

Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi      Mathematics

Al-Khwarizmi created a series of calculations for astronomical tables. He used what was called Hindu numerals. This included the use of zero. These passed into Western thought by way of Muslim Spain. In the West, his work was translated into Latin and was known as *Algoritmi de Numero Indorum* (al-Khwarizmi on the Numbers of India). The word *algorithm* derives from a Latin attempt to pronounce al-Khwarizmi. Over time, those numbers came to be called Arabic numbers.

Ibn Zakariya al-Razi      Medicine

Al-Razi was a great clinician and wrote *A Treatise on Smallpox and Measles*, a work which would be a standard in medicine for over four centuries

Ibn-al-Haitham      Optics

Better known in the West as Alhazen, he wrote *The Book of Optics* which shed great light on the use of the reflection of light from planar surfaces to concave and to parabolic surfaces.

# Reason: Islamic Contributions to Philosophy - I

## Ibn-Sina

- Ibn-Sina was known in the West as Avicenna. If Baghdad was the Athens of the East, Ibn-Sina was its Aristotle. Islam had preserved many of the writings of classical Greece, Ibn-Sina was an advocate of Aristotle both as a philosopher and a scientist. Ibn-Sina was also a faithful follower of Islam. He studied the physical world to learn more about Allah and the metaphysical world that lay beyond the physical.
- One of Ibn-Sina's great contributions to Islamic philosophy was his *Proof of the Truthful*. This proof argued that there must be a “necessary existent”, that is, the existence of an entity (Allah) that can not “not exist”.
- Ibn-Sina also produced works of science as well. His work, *The Canon of Medicine*, was an encyclopedia of medicine that was a standard reading in the medical schools of Europe into the eighteenth century
- Ibn-Sina's work, *The Book of Healing*, was more than just a book on medicine. It combined principles of philosophy, science, psychology and science to provide a holistic view of the human experience.

# Islamic Contributions to Philosophy - II

## Abu Hamid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazali

- For every Eden there seems always to be a serpent. Al-Ghazali disagreed with Avicenna (Ibn-Sina) regarding the use of human reason in trying to understand Allah, especially on the issue of cause and effect. Avicenna used this principle to help explain the existence of Allah as the uncaused cause, as the being who cannot 'not exist'. Al-Ghazali believed that the principle of cause and effect limited the supremely free will of Allah. Not every effect needed a cause and not every cause needed an effect. The will of Allah was the cause of everything. Nothing happened without the will of Allah. Any role of human reason could be viewed as limiting the will of Allah.
- Al-Ghazali wrote a work called the *Incoherence of Philosophers*. In this work, he attacked Avicenna specifically and the use of human reason generally when it attempted to consider things beyond basic physics. Interestingly, al-Ghazali used his sharply-honed human reason to reach that conclusion and never saw the irony in that.
- Avicenna used faith and reason to try to better understand the nature of Allah. Al-Ghazali relied on faith alone to understand the will of God. God's law was God's will as expressed in the Qu'ran. Learning Allah's will and submitting to it, was the primary task of any believer. This is what the Apostle Paul wrote against so fiercely. Internal obedience should derive from love not external obedience from fear. The Christian notion of God described a Deity who was transcendent to the point of be totally "other" but was also a Deity who could send his Son to involve himself intimately in the affairs of humanity. Allah was more "other" than the Christian God. Mohammed was his Prophet, not his Son. It would be hard to imagine an Islamic prayer that began with the words "Our Father".

# Islamic Contributions to Philosophy - III

## Abu I-Walid Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Rushd

- Known as Averroes (thank goodness) in the West, Ibn Rushd, like Avicenna before him, was taken by the works of Aristotle and wrote many commentaries on them. Like Avicenna, Averroes wrote many works about the physical world as well as the world beyond physics including works on medicine, the law and philosophy.
- Averroes attacked the beliefs of al-Ghazali that all events ultimately derived from the supreme will of Allah. He wrote *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* to stress how useless all human work would be if the principles of logic and the law of cause and effect were ignored.
- Al-Ghazali's views did not immediately win the day in Islam but, over time, they came to be the dominant views of the Faith. Submission to the will of Allah as expressed in Sharia Law became the dominant theme of Islam from both a political and a religious perspective.
- In Islam, Mosque and State did not ever become united at a moment in time as happened in the Roman Empire. The union of Mosque and State was an inherent part of the faith. It was there from the beginning. Just as it is unfair to look at the 613 mitzvot of Judaism as being imposed on the Jewish people, it is unfair to think of Sharia as being imposed on Muslims. Just as many Jews look on Torah as a means of coming closer to God, Muslims see Sharia as coming closer to the will of God as revealed by Mohammed. The approach to Law in both Judaism and Islam is not completely dissimilar. The dissimilarity is more in the nature of God.

# A Great Contributor of the Era – Not Islamic

## Moses ben Maimon Maimonides

- No discussion of Islam or even of Christianity in this time frame would be complete without mention of Maimonides, who was perhaps the greatest scholar and scientist of his era. In Hebrew, ben Maimon means “son of Maimon”. In Greek, the suffix –ides means “son of”. Jewish people today often refer to him simply as *Rambam*, an acronym for Rabeinu Moshe ben Maimon – Our Teacher Moses son of Maimon.
- Maimonides was born in Cordoba around 1135 CE. Cordoba was then under Moorish Islamic control. The Moors allowed Jews to practice their faith as long as they paid the *dhimmi* tax. Berber Muslims known as Almohads, conquered the Moors in 1148. They abolished the dhimmi tax and forced Jews to convert, go into exile or be executed. He chose exile and made his way to the Holy Land where he was a physician to Saladin himself.
- Maimonides was a polymath much like the Islamic scholars Averroes and Avicenna. Like those two men, he was well read in philosophy and science. He was also a master of the Jewish Law. Maimonides, familiar with the writings of Avicenna and Averroes, was an important process of passing the knowledge of Classical learning which had been preserved by Islam into the Latin West by way of Spain. I think it is also important to mention Maimonides because he stood in stark contrast to al-Ghazali. Maimonides reflected very well the integrated human for whom faith and reason could co-exist in trying to understand God by understanding the world God created.



# The Golden Age of Islam Comes to an End

- It is hard to point to a single cause or two as the specific reasons for the end of the Golden Age of Islam. Two events, however, do stand out as playing important roles for the decline and ultimate end of Islam's Golden Age.
- The first event was al-Ghazali's book, *The Incoherence of Philosophers*. Thanks to men like Averroes and Avicenna, al-Khwarizmi and others, The Golden Age of Islam allowed for human knowledge to flourish. There was an excitement about new understandings that might be gained using human reason to get a deeper insight into nature and the God who created nature. Over time, al-Ghazali's writings took Islam into a different direction.
- The second event was destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258. The center of Arabic learning was destroyed. The Grand Library of Baghdad, the House of Wisdom, was demolished. Survivors say that the Tigris ran black from the ink of the documents contained in the library that were thrown into the river and red from the blood of scientists and philosophers that were killed. By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, faith would have dominance over reason in Islam
- Christians had started to push back against the Islamic forces in Spain. In the centuries before 1492, when Islam rule in Spain and Portugal ended, Muslim and Christian mixed. It was during this time that many of the works of Islamic Scholars were translated from Arabic into Latin. In 1492, Ferdinand and Isabella removed the last Muslim-governed region from the peninsula. The Golden Age of Islam had long since ended. This seemed to put an exclamation point on it.

# Impact of Islam to Christianity

- **Muslims preserved much of what the Christians they had conquered believed. They did so by writing about the arguments made against them by Christians. These Christian points were preserved through time. While Western Europe of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Century AD was more Aryan Christian than Nicene Catholic Christian, Islam, along with Irish monasticism, each for an entirely different reason, preserved the arguments that Nicene Catholic Christians used to support their belief that Jesus was both fully human and fully divine.**
- **Islam preserved traditions of medicine, science and philosophy derived from Greek learning much of which was originally written by the pagan Greeks even before the time of Christ, but some of which was created by Christian Greek scientists and philosophers. Islamic learning passed from the Middle East and Africa into Europe through Spain and led to the High Middle Ages and the Renaissance**
- **Islamic warriors within a period of one hundred years transformed a Christian civilization which had been Christian for centuries into a series of societies which have remained Islamic to this day. Of the countries swallowed up by the Islamic tide from 632-732 CE, only Spain and Portugal managed to reverse the tide**
- **Islamic abhorrence of imagery contributed to the great Iconoclastic heresy and al-Ghazali's skepticism of the use of reason in matters of faith led to the third major event that damaged Christian morality, Nominalism, which we will discuss in a later section.**

# Islam and Submission

- The Islamic understanding of God differs from that of Christianity. Islam proclaims that there is no God but God. Islamic beliefs about Jesus (Isa) was that he was great Prophet but not divine. He only seemed to suffer and die on the cross. This is a form of Docetism. Some Muslims even believe that Jesus was born of Mary, a virgin.
- It is easy then to believe that the Jewish and Islamic concept of God were very similar to each other and not far different from the Christian understanding of God the Father. That belief would be wrong.
- Allah is far more an ineffable (more 'other') character than the Jewish or Christian notion of God. For Muslims, what is known about God is what has been revealed in the Qu'ran and the Hadith (subject, of course, to the interpretations of various and sundry Imams), full stop! Imams themselves began to play an increasingly important role in the political life of Islam. Given that Islam lacked a true center since the decline of the Caliphate, each Imam or other religious leader would put his own stamp on how the Qu'ran was best understood.
- While Christian theologians could ponder endlessly on trying to better understand the nature of their triune God, and Jewish rabbis could engage in lengthy debates about God, Muslims focused more on understanding the will of Allah and submitting themselves to that will. The word Islam itself comes from the Arabic word *al-silm* which means submission.
- Christians could easily speak of a personal relationship with Christ. They could speak of conforming themselves to Christ using the gifts of the Holy Spirit to break the addiction to selfish love left to them by Adam and to learn to love selflessly as Jesus loved. It is hard to imagine a Muslim having a personal relationship with the ineffable Allah. A Muslim might conform himself to the will of Allah, but to Allah himself? Not likely.

# Keep This in Mind About Islam

- For several centuries, while Western Europe went through the Dark Ages, Islam led the world in mathematics (algebra, algorithm, Arabic numbers), architecture, science and medicine (Avicenna). They also preserved much of the Greek and Latin literature which would later lead to the Renaissance in Western Europe. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Baghdad had become Islam's Athens.
- Over time, something changed. Islam began to distrust human reason and concentrate solely on the will of Allah. Accompanying this line of thinking was an active distrust of human reason. It's hard to say if that change happened gradually or if specific events led to the change. In any case, we have looked at the two specific events should be mentioned that had, at least, some impact on that change.
- Many say that Islam is in need of a reformer be it one as Jesus was to Judaism or one as Martin Luther was to the Roman version of Catholic Christianity. Others say that Islam has already had its reformer and his name was al-Ghazali. As events occur today, it seems that those who believe the latter thesis are correct.

# Obvious Impacts of Islam on Christianity

- Islam had many immediate and obvious impacts on Christianity. Cities that were great centers of Christian learning and pilgrimage were no longer Christian. Many people who had been Christians converted to Islam. Those who maintained their faith, if they were lucky, were considered second class citizens (*dhimmi*) and were forced to pay the *jizyah* (tax imposed on the dhimmi). Many were not so lucky. The Islamic *Millet* system allowed religious leaders who submitted to their status as dhimmi and who paid the Jizyah could remain as leaders withing their sects.
- Islam remained in constant conflict with the Byzantine Romans. Islamic Ottoman Turks would bring about the end of that Empire around 1453. After their defeat at the hands of the Franks in 732, Islam had little affect on Western Europe. Pagan Angles and Saxons ruled in England. Pope Gregory the Great sent Augustine (now known as Augustine of Canterbury) to re-convert the former Roman province. Ethelbert was the Anglo-Saxon king of Kent. Augustine converted him to Catholic Christianity around 597.
- Visigothic Spain had been Arian Christian since 419. In 587, its King, Reccared, converted to Catholic Christianity. When Muslim armies under General Tariq (Gibraltar = *Jebel al Tariq* or Tariq's Mountain) conquered Spain, a resistance managed to maintain a small area in the north called the Kingdom of Asturias, later to be known as the Kingdom of Leon. It maintained a small Catholic Christian presence in the peninsula.
- The Catholic Kingdom of the Franks changed its dynastic lineage from Merovingian to Carolingian. It's most famous King, Charlemagne, declared the Kingdom to be the Holy Roman Empire. Charlemagne protected the Bishop of Rome from the Lombards in Italy, fostered learning throughout the Empire and saved Latin, the language of the Romans.

# **A Less Immediate Impact of Islam on Christianity**

- **Byzantine Roman Emperor, Leo III, was raised in Syria and therefore known as the Isaurian. He was crowned Emperor in 717. Leo managed to hold off a massive attack by Islamic forces against Constantinople itself that began later that same year. While Leo successfully defended the Byzantine Roman Empire against Islam militarily, being raised in Syria, he had come to have a certain respect for both Islam and Judaism. He admired a trait of both Islam and Judaism that saw religious imagery as a form of idolatry.**
- **The prohibition against imagery in those faiths was not unreasonable. The Jewish and Islamic understanding of God was a single, completely spiritual being. The Catholic Christian understanding of God was a single godhead of three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity intersected the physical universe in some way. The voice of the Father was heard on at least two occasions. Jesus was the Son who was born, lived, died and was resurrected. The Holy Spirit appeared either as a tongue of fire or a dove. It is true that the Father never appeared in Jesus' time but, unlike Islam and Judaism, Jesus said that we should pray to God as Father, so it was not unusual for him to be depicted as an old man.**
- **Art, expressed in painting and sculpture, existed from the very beginnings of Christianity. The terms used for this era of art is Paleo-Christian art or primitive Christian art. When Caliph Omar was attempting to assault Constantinople, he heard about Leo's respect for Islam and tried to convert him. Leo thought that if Christianity abandoned its art and images, it might appeal more to Islam and open Muslims to Christianity.**

# Islam Causes a Christian Controversy

- In 726, Leo III issued an edict declaring all Christian imagery to be a form of idolatry. He referenced Exodus 20:4-5 to support his stance. This drew an immediate negative response from Byzantine Catholic Christianity which had long used icons as part of teaching the faith. When Leo began destroying icons, the people rioted.
- Germanus, the Patriarch of Constantinople, appealed to Leo to change his mind. Leo did not. Germanus then appealed to the *primus inter pares* of Patriarchs, the Pope in Rome. The Pope declared in favor of Germanus and against Leo. Leo then deposed Germanus as Patriarch and replaced him with Athanasius, a man more favorable to Leo's views. Leo also used his military to enforce his decision on monasteries and Churches throughout his empire. He sent a letter to the Pope in Rome requiring him to order all the Churches in the West to destroy their art. The Pope ignored Leo's threat. John of Damascus, a Christian whose piety and intelligence were valued by both Caliphs and Patriarchs, and considered a great Father of the Church, condemned Leo.
- Two successors to Leo, Constantine V and Leo IV, continued Leo III's policy. Constantine V even tried to call a Council. Finally, Constantine VI and Empress Irene, his mother and his regent, requested Pope Adrian I to agree with them to convene a Council in Constantinople (the Second Council of Constantinople) to settle the controversy. Adrian sent legates and, after an attempt by some in the Byzantine military to disrupt it, the Council convened. It declared, among other things, the Iconoclasm of Leo and his followers was heretical. This last Great Council was the final example of East and West working together. Despite the clear teaching of both the Eastern and Western Churches, iconoclastic movements continue even today to influence churches in both Eastern and Western Christianity.