

Chapter 1, Section 1: Byzantium: Rome's Eastern Empire

The Byzantine Empire survived from 527–1453. Geographic factors made the capital city, Constantinople, a powerful center for trade. Although the empire collapsed during a dispute about politics and religion, it left behind a system of laws that affected many European nations.

I. Constantinople's Geography

Constantinople's location made it a natural crossroads of trade. The Byzantines grew rich from the **trade routes** that they controlled – from Moscow to the Mediterranean, and from China all the way to Western Europe. The Byzantines charged **duties, or taxes**, on all goods that went through the city. They made money off every item traded.

II. Building the Byzantine Empire

Constantinople was not always a byzantine city. First, it was part of Greece. Later it was part of the Roman Empire. In A.D. 330 Constantine, the first **Christian emperor** of the Roman Empire moved his capital from Rome to Byzantium. The city was then renamed Constantinople, which means “City of Constantine.”

A. *The Roman Empire Splits into East and West.*

Hundreds of years ago, the Roman Empire broke apart. It split into **eastern and western** divisions. The western half of the Roman Empire was overrun by invaders in A.D. 476. The eastern half survived as the Byzantine Empire until 1453. The Byzantine Empire lasted a very long time because of **trade**. Because Constantinople was a trading crossroads, the empire remained strong. The Byzantines also had a **strong army**, the best in the world.

B. *A Great Emperor*

Clever rulers also helped to maintain the empire. Byzantine emperors had much more **power** than most rulers have today. They thought of themselves as **representatives** of god on the earth. Among the greatest of byzantine emperors was Justinian, who ruled

from 527 to 565. Justinian was not a typical emperor. He was born into a **poor** family, and he married an actress. One reason for Justinian's success was his wife, **Theodora**. As empress, she took an active role in politics. Many of Justinian's most intelligent decisions were made on her advice.

III. Fall of the Byzantine Empire

After Justinian's death in 565, the Byzantine Empire began to decline. In 1453, it completely collapsed. This fall was sparked by an argument about **politics and religion**.

A. A Religions Dispute

Most of the people and all of the rulers in the Byzantine Empire were **Christians**. However, they did not agree on how to worship God. Some people prayed to saints or holy people represented on **icons**, or paintings of these saints or holy people. Others believed that people should pray only to God. The religious arguments spread from Constantinople to Rome. The **patriarch**, leader of the Church in Constantinople, and the pope, leader of the Church in Rome, took opposite sides. In 1054, they each took steps to throw the other out of the Church. These acts by the Church's most powerful leaders led to a **schism**, or split in the Christian world.

B. The Fall of Constantinople

Splitting from the Roman Catholic Church made Byzantine empire a target for invasion. In 1453, Constantinople was captured by the Ottoman Turks, non-Christian enemies of the Byzantines.

IV. What the Byzantines Gave Us.

Major achievements of the Byzantines affect our world today. Perhaps the most important is a system of laws.

A. *The Code of Justinian*

When Justinian became emperor, laws were completely disorganized. Justinian ordered his lawyers to clean-up the mess. The Code of Justinian clearly spelled out the laws and explained their meanings. The code became the backbone of the legal systems of many European nations.

B. *Preserving Ancient Knowledge*

The Byzantines recorded and saved the knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome. The period of Byzantine rule in the east was a period of disorder and destruction in Western Europe. If the Byzantines had not copied and cared for ancient books, Greek and Roman advances in science, mathematics, and health care would have been lost.

Section 1 Review