

Lesson 3 The Early Byzantine Empire

MAIN IDEAS

Government The legacy of Rome continued with the Byzantine Empire.

Geography Located between the East and the West, the Byzantines created a unique society.

Belief Systems Christianity thrived in the Byzantine Empire but eventually split into two separate churches.

Justinian Builds a New Rome

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What were the main characteristics of the Byzantine Empire?

The Rule of Justinian

- Roman Empire split; west fell, east became the **Byzantine Empire**
- **Justinian I**—powerful Byzantine ruler; reigned from 527 to 565
 - expanded empire, regained former Roman lands in the West
 - created **Justinian Code**—legal system that guided Byzantine society
 - built impressive structures; lived in palace with wife Theodora

Hagia Sophia

- Justinian oversaw building of awe-inspiring church, Hagia Sophia

REVIEW QUESTION

What were some of Justinian's main accomplishments?

The Rise of Constantinople

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What was life like in Constantinople?

The Capital City

- Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire
- City's location between Europe and Asia made it busy trade center
- Mese, or "Middle Way," was city's main commercial street
 - merchants stalls lined Mese; sold goods from Asia, Africa, Europe
- city also offered entertainment at large arena, the Hippodrome

REVIEW QUESTION

What were some of the main attractions of Constantinople?

Disagreements Split Christianity

ESSENTIAL QUESTION What two churches emerged from the split in Christianity?

Christianity Remains Strong

- Christianity was primary religion in Byzantine Empire and West
- Christian church developed a well-defined structure
 - priests led small groups of Christians; bishops led several churches
- Bishop of Rome known as the pope—head of the Christian church
- Despite fall from glory, Rome remained the center of Christianity

Tensions Rise

- Byzantine emperors claimed authority over church in Byzantine Empire
- Popes disagreed; argued they had final say over all Christian church
- Disagreement led to strained relations between East and West churches
- Emperor Leo III banned the use of icons by Eastern Christians in 730
- Pope supported icons; excommunicated Leo III from Church

The Church Splits

- Differences continued between East (Byzantine), West (Roman) churches
- In 1054, Church suffered **schism**—official split between East and West
 - **Roman Catholic**—church in the West, led by pope
 - **Orthodox**—church in the East, led by patriarch
- Churches shared many Christian principles; established key differences
 - both pope and emperor claimed authority over church and state

REVIEW QUESTION

How did the schism of 1054 affect the Christian church?

Lesson Summary

- After the Western Roman Empire fell, the Byzantine Empire continued many Roman ways.
- Influenced by both Rome and the East, the Byzantines developed a unique culture.
- Disagreements within the Christian church caused it to split into two separate churches.

Why It Matters Now . . .

Today, millions of people still practice Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.