

Charlemagne: known as charles the great

[People](#)



Charlemagne, also known as Charles the Great, became the undisputed ruler of Western Europe, " By the sword and the cross." As Western Europe was deteriorating Charlemagne was crowned the privilege of being joint king of the Franks in 768 AD. People of Western Europe, excluding the church followers, had all but forgotten the great gifts of education and arts that they had possessed at one time. Charlemagne solidly defeated barbarians and kings in identical fashion during his reign. Using the re-establishment of education and order, Charlemagne was able to save many political rights and restore culture in Western Europe.

Charlemagne was born in 742 AD, to a very famous and well-known family. Charlemagne's grandfather was Charles Martel, the man who was responsible for the defeat of the Saracens. Charlemagne was also the eldest son of Bertrade and Pepin the Short, the first to become king of the Franks. With the almost full extinction of schools in the 8th century, many historians say that Charlemagne received very little education, but did learn the art of reading from Bertrade.

In 768 AD, Charlemagne at the age of 26, along with his brother Carloman inherited the kingdom of Franks. However, in 771 AD Carloman died, making Charlemagne the sole ruler of the kingdom. At this time the northern part of Europe was out of order and unruly. In the south, the Roman Catholic Church was asserting itself alongside the Lombard kingdom in Italy. While in Charlemagne's own kingdom, the people were becoming and acting as barbarians and neglecting education and faith.

But Charlemagne was determined to make his kingdom as strong as possible. In 772 AD, Charlemagne put forth a 30-year campaign to conquer and Christianize the Saxons in the north. He charged over the Avars, a large tribe on the Danube. He forced the Bavarians to surrender to him. When possible Charlemagne attempted to settle his conflicts peacefully. However, he was forced to use brute in some situations. For instance, Charlemagne offered to pay Desiderius for the return of lands to the pope, but after Desiderius refused, Charlemagne seized the kingdom of Desiderius and restored the Papal States.

By 800 AD Charlemagne was the sole ruler of Western Europe. His immense kingdom included what are now France, Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. It also covered half of present-day Italy and Germany, part of Austria, and the Spanish March. This Spanish March stretched to the Ebro River. Through his establishment of a single government over the entire Western Europe, Charlemagne re-established much of the old Roman Empire, which paved the way for the progress of present-day Europe.

On Christmas Day in 800 while praying in St. Peter" s Cathedral in Rome, Pope Leo III approached Charlemagne with a golden crown and placed it on the head of the king. The crowd in the church shouted concurrently, " To Charles the Augustus, crowned by God to be the great and peace-giving emperor of the Romans, life and victory!"

Doing this angered the Byzantines because Charlemagne" s prestige and power was equal to the Byzantine emperor. Another problem that arose was

that the pope thereafter chose the Roman emperor among the European kings.

At the time of Charlemagne's death in 814 AD only one of his three sons, Louis the Pious was alive. Louis had a weak ruling after his father, which brought on many civil wars and rebellions. As king and emperor, he was very religious and it is said that the role of a monk better suited him than that of the Roman emperor.

When Louis the Pious passed away, his three sons broke out in civil war for their father's empire. In 843, the war ended when Lothair, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German signed the Treaty of Verdun. This pact separated the empire into three separate parts for each of Louis the Pious's sons.

After the treaty was signed, the kings' power deteriorated and the government became weak. All of Europe was invaded and pirates and barbarians threatened the land. Charlemagne's empire began to weaken.