

# [The era of justinian](https://assignbuster.com/the-era-of-justinian/)

Justinian was a strong andhard-working emperor who changed the eastern Roman empire tremendously. Justinian lived in an era after the Roman empire had divided into two, theeastern and western empires. A few years before he rose to emperor, the westernempire collapsed and was conquered by barbarians. Justinian was born into apeasant family, his uncle, Justin, who had no children of his own, decided to‘ adopt’ Justinian and take him under his wing. Justin was a stalwart soliderwho later rose to command the imperial guard, this inspired Justinian toachieve the same accolade.

Justinian was eager to succeed in thekingdom’s ruling bodies, and after his uncle’s passing, he was confirmed as emperor. His realm was a successful one but also had its downfalls. He was shortsighted, only looking for quick returns on his own personal agendas He did notthink about the consequences that conquering the west or uniting Christianitywill have on the empire. He created economic instability, violence betweenreligions and many border conflicts. However, Justinian’s reign was not allnegative, He made changes that would benefit the kingdom, changing the law and architecturalpractices. The era of Justinian is an important part of the Roman empire. As Maashighlights, “ The age of Justinian stands at a historical milestone, making atransition from antiquity to the middle ages”[1]. Justinians reign affected the yearsafterwards both for the better and for the worst, these changes have stood thetest of time and are still present in today’s modern world.

Justinian had one main aim when he became emperor, to restore the power and authority of the roman empire. This caused numerous problems for the kingdom throughout his reign and particularly caused a greater problem for the emperors that followed. Treadgold explains, He wanted authority over the barbarian kings and recover the west[2]. He was narrow minded thinking that these conquests would quickly reap rewards for the kingdom which was the main reason for disappointment in his realm. With the aim to restore the empire, especially in Italy, he started numerous confrontations on the border which caused a period of economic uncertainty. Davis Highlights, Justinian’s dreams where unrealistic and also dangerous. He would not improve the position of Italy, he made it worse.[3]Justinian did not think about the damages that conquering Italy will have on the empire, he was more concerned about it being under his rule.

Justinian may have remembered the fancifulstories he heard about the amazing Empire with the west and he was drawntowards this ultimate goal. As Maas explains, Justinian was eager to reassertRoman authority over these lost territories.[4]Nothing and no one could stop his vision, astrong kingdom including the old western border. When he rose into power thewestern Empire was fading from memory[5], this concerned Justinian and influencedhis decision to reform the empire, along with the desertion of faith in Italyunder Barbarians rule. During his era, he began conquering the lands of the oldempire and re-establishing the power and might of the Romans. With the aid ofBelisarius, he was able to regain a large amount of the old western empire. This was an outstanding accomplishment due to the relatively short amount oftime he took to triumph compared to other rulers.

Throughout the years Justinian gainedand lost land, especially towards the end of his tenure, Italy and other partsof the old western empire were struggling to stay under the Byzantine rule. Dueto his eagerness Justinian had to conquer the west immediately, withoutadequate planning the empire will lose the land they had recently captured. This was a major downfall

Duringhis reign, Justinian made a large alteration to the law and legislation. Whenhe rose to the throne there were a whole multitude of law books and rules with mostjudges and lawyers unable to understand the complexity and jurisdiction of thesentencing process. Not only did remembering the vast array of laws createproblems but also many contradicted each other. Each empire wrote laws thatwould benefit their own ruling bodies at the time without checking that therule would not be at variance with existing laws. This created deliberation anda heavy workload for the legal system. Gibbon writes, “ In the space of tencenturies the infinite variety of laws and legal opinions had filled manythousand volumes books”.[6]Justinian had assigned Tribonian, an important Roman law writer, to take all of these laws and concise them into anew law book.[7]Tribonian does so and finishes in the year 533Ac, with a new and improved lawsystem . Afterwards he assisted Justinian with other legal matters throughouthis ruling.

Thelaw was in order again, as Gledon highlights, without Justinian and Tribonianthe roman law would be lost forever.[8]Justinian’s law wouldcarry on throughout history, enabling people to rely on these new laws to defendthemselves whenever necessary. The law put order into the empire, it showed theimportance of how a clear and concise legal system could benefit the empire. Justinianknew this and did what no other emperor had done before him, he had solved the long-lastingproblem of implementing effective legislation.

This would not be forgotten, with many greatrulers afterwards referring to his legal strategy whenever times becamedifficult. This is a major success for Justinian’s ruling, with the law in placehe can oversee its virtue. He can create order in his kingdom, less violenceand more harmony. With the empire united he could continue focusing on hisother goals, expanding territory and establish religious unity.

Anotherimportant action Justinian achieved was trying to reunite the Monotheist, Polytheism and the Christian religions. Justinian fell in love with an actress, named Theodora, who he decided to marry. She was a Polytheism while he was aMonotheist and it became one of Justinian’s goal to reunite the Christians intoone again, especially after his beloved wife’s death. This was not a greatsuccess with both sides refusing to relinquish their beliefs, this caused alarger “ tear” in the problematic world of the Christians, causing morearguments and dividing the faiths further apart.

Justinianwas a religious man, as Moorhead describes, “ Justinian’s invasions like so manyof his activities early in his reign was motivated by religion rather thanideology”[9]. He made his decisionthrough faith which was popular through the medieval period. However, Justinianknew how important it was to unite Christianity. As Croke explain, The EmperorJustinian was an avid builder of churches[10]. Justinian wanted to showhis religious persuasion through the churches and monasteries he hadconstructed throughout the kingdom. A legacy for future generations to adore.

Justinianchanged the lives of his citizens in many ways, through religion, new laws andportraying his beliefs through the whole kingdom. As Sarris describes, Justinian’s programme of legal reform and interventions in the development offormation of church doctrine. He broke down barriers between civil society andrealms of belief.[11]Justinian changed thechurch and the relation of the empire with it.  As Meyendorff highlights, “ In Justinian’slegal thinking there is actually no place at all for the church as a society”[12]. Justinian understood theproblems of the church and put his religious opinion aside for the benefit ofthe empire. As Meyendorff continues, “ He could not for what him was an obviousobligation, to extend the competence of the law to the sphere of religion”[13]. He knew that thisproblem could not be avoided any longer, he took the problem and put the lawahead of religion. This was unsuccessful for Justinian with Christiansdisagreeing with him and saying that no one can be above god.

Throughout the passing years Justinian tried to promote a uniformed understanding, wherethe law would be above all and only one Christian faith with the same beliefwould be accepted. This was a failure for Justinian he failed unitingChristianity and caused new problems to erupt in the passing years. Strugglesand violence between the Monotheist and Polytheism, disagreeing with oneanother. As Maas clarifies, “ Justinian tireless efforts for religious unitybore bittersweet fruit.[14]This idea of a unifiedreligion was impossible to achieve as much as Justinian tried.

Oneof Justinian’s ability’s, which allowed him to succeed, was his skill to employthe right person for the task. He had beside him some powerful people with alarge knowledge in their field. This started with his wife, as Baker utters, “ Alife of Justinian naturally begins with Teodora”[15]. She was a powerful womanpushing her husband to his full ability. Theodora helped Justinian in manyways, forcing him to stay as emperor when he wanted to flee for his life. Another powerful ally was John, he was assigned to collect taxes in theByzantine empire. As Baker highlights, “ any system from a Byzantine tax officeto a modern steel rolling mills would have walked when a man like John held itby the ear”[16]. John was close to Justinian, he helped him gather funds, even if partly gainedusing illegal actions. John gathered what was needed and did not hesitate for asecond to use any method at his disposal. One of the most well-known people towork under Justinian was Belisarius, he was a knowledgeable solider who wassuccessful in his role. Belisarius knew how to combat the barbarians andconquered many lands. All of these powerful people assisted Justinian to succeed, however Justinian knew their individual strengths and could assign the rightindividual to reap the highest rewards.

Theempire of Justinian was an effective one but ultimately also unsuccessful. Hemade many decisions that affected the reign for the better, building manyarchitectural buildings and renewing the law to what it is today. He helped createa concise legal system which was easier to implement leading to a more peacefulkingdom. However, during his time there were financial problems, religiousdifficulties and border conflicts all caused by his overriding belief of re- establishingthe old empire. Justinian was a smart emperor knowing who to recruit for the appropriatejob, if it was Belarus who conquered land and granted everything he asked foror Tribonian collating the complicated legislation into a simplified law. However, Justinian was short sighted, not having the prescience of how his decisions wouldaffect every aspect of the kingdom.

In his last years the plague affected a wide area of the Mediterranean, devastating the population which left them open to continual attacks from various barbarian factions, combined with the religious divisions and economic instability, people were elated in his passing and looked forward to a brighter future. Due to Justinian and Teodora having no children his nephew, Justin the second, continued his reign. As Gibbon explains, “ Justinian’s nephew proclaimed a new era of happiness and glory”[17]. This opened a new era of relief for the country, people where suffering toward the end of Justinian’s realm. Justinian’s era was an important section in history with success and also failures. But this is an era that will never be forgotten.

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