

Byzantine golden age

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



As the barbarians were conquering Western Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman Empire, otherwise known as the Byzantine Empire, was beginning to undergo another golden age. A golden age is characterized by peace, prosperity, advances in learning and technology, flourishing arts or literature, and impressive architectural achievements. The Byzantine Empire went into a golden age because they had a good government, a good military and thriving culture. Byzantine government, controlled by Justinian from 527 to 565, controlled an army that brought Byzantine borders to their furthest extent, and made Byzantine a great place to live. Under the rule of Justinian, the Byzantine's government was great, which led to a golden age. The 38 years of his reign was the most amazing period of time for Byzantine Empire. His most important contribution was a code of law. He hired a team of scholars to compile old Roman laws and new Byzantine laws and form it into one code of law. His code of law was organized so as to recapture the lost glory of Roman Empire. It was placed publicly and it was widely translated so that all citizens could read it (O'Connor). His code was first written in Latin and soon it was translated into Greek, and spread to become the main legal system in Europe and Asia Minor. His idea to keep records of court cases to use in coming cases saved many misjudgments; these principles are still used today in modern law. Justinian led the Byzantine Empire into a well-ordered state using his code of law. The Byzantine Empire's goal was to reestablish the Roman Empire into the entire Mediterranean world. Rome had fallen in 476. The Byzantine army, commanded by the great general Belisarius, had a goal to defeat the barbarians that had defeated Rome. Those armies defeated the Vandals in 533-534, and defeated the Ostrogoths

battles that took place from 535 to 544. The goal was completed and Belisarius restored the Roman Empire to the Mediterranean region. The empire now included Italy, part of Spain, North Africa, Asia Minor, Palestine, and Syria. (Jacob). Justinian's new empire could be compared the vast empire of Rome. The Byzantine culture was a new, and a different culture mostly based on religious values. Originally, the faith of the Byzantines was a Roman Catholic one. But over time, it changed to become Orthodox. The leaders of the Orthodox Church were loyal to the Byzantine Emperor, who himself was the official head of the eastern church. In contrast, the Roman Catholic leaders (the popes) were not loyal to the Emperor. It is interesting to note that Justinian was commonly depicted in mosaics with a crown and halo, showing his connection with church and state. The connection between church and state further strengthened the culture and the developing golden age. The Byzantine's greatest architectural work, the Hagia Sophia, is an example how the Empire and the Church worked together to achieve something great. The Hagia Sophia is a gigantic domed cathedral completed in 537. The Greek architect of the structure did not want to use the traditional flat roofed church of the west. The center of the Hagia Sofia had four large piers, crowned by an enormous dome. " From the lightness of the building it does not appear to be upon a solid foundation, but more suspended from heaven by the fabled golden chain."(Speilvogel) Byzantine culture was supported by Byzantine trade. That trade was diverse, with silk from China, jewelry and ivory from India, wheat and fur from Russia, and flax and honey from the Balkans (Speilvogel). Their art was typified by great Christian mosaics and frescos of saints. The Byzantines had a unique culture

that was truly their own. The Byzantine golden age was truly a time of advancing borders, culture, and government. Their greatness rivals that of their predecessors. The Byzantine Empire will forever be remembered as one of the greatest empires in history. It lasted from the establishment of Constantinople in 330 by the Emperor Constantine the Great until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453. That is a far greater length of time than the empire of Rome had lasted.