The Middle Ages in Europe

Chapter 8
Important Ideas

• The Byzantine Empire merged with Constantinople, lasting 1,000 years.
  – Emperor Justinian used the Roman laws to create a new legal code.

• After the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe fell into a period of chaos.
  – Invaders kept cities in chaos
  – Cities became ruined or weak
  – The learning of the ancient world was lost
• Europeans developed feudalism →

• The catholic church preserved learning and became the most powerful institution in Europe

• St. Augustine emphasized the role of faith

• St. Thomas Aquinas believed Christian teachings were compatible with the exercise of reason

• Christians and Muslims fought for the Holy Land.
A Byzantine Culture Emerges

• 330 A.D. Emperor Constantine moved the capital empire to Byzantine, renamed it Constantinople.

• Constantinople was surrounded by 3 sides of water and had thick walls
  – Almost impossible to attack.
• Western half of the Roman Empire collapsed in 400 A.D.
  – Eastern half survived another 1000 years
• Imperial system of government
• Official language was Latin but was changed to Greek
• Did not follow Roman Catholicism, they were Eastern Orthodox
  – Does not recognize the Pope as head of church
  – Had their own patriarch
  – Decorated their churches with icons of Jesus and saints
• Byzantines developed a strong culture
  – Church of Hagia Sophia
  – Schools taught ancient Greek texts
  – Used gold, silver and ivory for art
  – Known for mosaics

• Under Emperor Justinian 527-565
  – conquered the old Roman Empire
  – Code of Justinian
    • Collected all the Roman laws and organized them into a single code
    • Special laws to religion
    • All persons in the empire had to be Eastern Orthodox
Reasons for survival of the Byzantine Empire

• Classical Culture
  – Rich infusion of Greek, Roman, Christian and Middle eastern cultures

• Location
  – Major city for trade: Silks and spices from the East, furs from Russia

• Strong Central Government
  – Powerful emperors with strong administrations and single set of laws

• Large Army
  – Taxed merchants and peasants to support a large army
Decline of the Byzantine Empire

- Was in constant battle with:
  - Slavs and Avars to the north
  - Persian Empire to the east
  - Islam to the south
    - Muslims took the most of the territory in the middle east
- The Seljuk Turks defeated the Byzantine army in 1071 and took Asia Minor
- Crusaders attacked the city in 1204
- By the 1440’s the empire was reduced to a small area around the Constantinople
- 1453 Constantinople was conquered by the Ottoman Turks
Western Europe in Turmoil

• The Barbarian Invasions
  – The Romans considered people of foreign non-Roman culture was a “barbarian”
  – Germanic tribes:
    • Goths, Vandals, Lombards, Burgundians, and Franks

• In 300 A.D. a war like tribe known as the Huns moved from central Asia to Europe.
  – Forced Germanic tribes to move west into the Roman Empire
• Rome allowed the Visigoths to enter to escape the Huns
  – Visigoth turned against the Romans
  – Defeated and sacked Rome in 410 A.D. (was helped by Germanic slaves in Rome)
• After a period of invasions the Germanic tribes created kingdoms
  – Angles and Saxon invaded England
  – Visigoths into Spain
  – Lombards occupied North Italy
  – Franks to Gaul (France)
• Constant warfare disrupted trade across Europe.
  – Traveling became unsafe
  – Bridges and roads fell apart
  – Cities and towns were abandoned
  – Criminals roamed free
  – Life became rural and unsafe
  – Rich families moves to fortified homes (castles) in the countryside.
  – Shortage of food
  – Churches and monasteries was the only place people could read and write.
The Rise of the Franks

• The Franks established the largest Germanic kingdom
• Charles Martel helped unite the Franks
• 732 A.D. at the **Battle of Tours** Martel stopped the advance of Islam from Spain into France
• 751 A.D. his son Pepin seized power and became the King of Franks
• With the Pope’s support he took control of Northern Italy.
• Frankish Kings created a powerful army by granting land to nobles in exchange for service in the King’s army with their knights. ➔ Feudal System
Reign of Charlemagne

• Pepin’s son, Charlemagne, became king in 768
• Expanded the practice of giving land to nobles in exchange for loyalty and services
  – Nobles gave land to knights in exchange for protection
    • Peasants gave up their rights to their local lords for protection
      – Services included providing firewood, livestock and crops
• The Charlemagne Kingdom included, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Northern Italy
  – New capital at Aachen (center of learning)
• He used his riches to attract scholars to his palace for children of nobility.
• Charlemagne was crowned “Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire”
  – Western Europe now independent from the Byzantine empire
  – Christendom became the unity of Western Europe
• After his death, the empire was divided to his sons
Europe’s New Threats

• Slavs and Magyars from the east invaded Germany, France and Italy
• Muslims from North Africa attacked Southern Italy
• Vikings from the north (Scandinavia)
  – Fierce Warriors and sailors
  – Searched for trade, loot, and land
• 800-1000 A.D. the Vikings attacked the coasts of Western Europe.
• Spreading fear and destruction
• Created new settlements in
  – Danelaw, North England
  – Normandy, France
  – Islands of Sicily
Feudal Society

• In order to protect themselves and provide the basic needs, people adopted **feudalism**.
  – The king would give land (fief) to a noble (vassal) in exchange for loyalty and service
  – The vassal would give a piece of land to servants in exchange for services and food.
• SOCIAL
  – A strict class structure based on control of land and military power
  – People born as a serf, knight, or lords could not change their social position.
  – Lords who had large pieces of land had a large army of knights

• POLITICAL
  – Leading nobles controlled political life
  – Built large castles for protection
  – The king needed the lord’s knights for the army
  – Nobles fought against each other and against the king
  – Civil wars were frequent and powerful nobles would take land
• ECONOMIC

– Most people lived in manors
– Each manor produced its own food, clothing and shelter.
– In England alone, there were 9,000 manors
– Serfs (peasant farmers) gave their lord a part of their harvest
  • in return they would get land to live on, and for protection
  • The lord could pass laws, require labor, and act as a judge.
  • Serfs could not leave the land
  • Serfs could almost be considered as slaves
• Farming in the Middle Ages
  – Farmers used a three-field system
    • Two fields were used to farm
      – One for summer
      – One for winter
    • One was left to recover fertility
  – Farm animals were small and few
  – Bad weather and a poor harvest could lead to famine and death.
• Peasant Life-Styles
  – Peaseants produced the food needed
  – Worked long hours, most on the land
  – Most were farmers some had other jobs
    • Millers, blacksmiths, tavern owners
  – Peasants lived on farms or near by cities on a lord’s manor
  – The cottage (house) had no floors, bed was made of hay, pigs and animals lived inside the house
  – Water was drawn from a well or stream
• WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE AGES
  – Roles were determined by the Catholic Church and nobility
  – Suppose to be obedient to men
  – Women of all social classes gave birth to a large number of children
    • Many children died in infancy
  – Life-styles varied according to social status
    • Noble women spent most time praying and domestic chores (some would receive an education)
    • Peasant women worked in the fields plus, take care of the house, husband, children and animals
Age of Faith

• The Catholic Church was the single most powerful organization in Western Europe

• Head of the church—Pope
  – Successor to St. Peter, leader of the apostles
  – Pope governed the church
    • Cardinals, bishops, and other church officials

• The church controlled large amounts of land in Europe

• The church possessed monasteries, abbeys, and convents
Reasons for the Church’s Power

• The Role of Faith
  – People were very religious
  – Church represented God—had the power to send people to heaven or hell

• Power and Wealth
  – Nobles gave land to the church when they died hoping to go to heaven
  – The church was the largest landowner in Europe
  – Collected money through tithes

• Center of Learning
  – Main center of learning
  – Church officials usually only people to read and write
  – Rulers depended on the church because they were educated
The Crusades
Holy War against Muslims

• 1000 A.D. the Seljuk Turks took control of the Holy Land (Jerusalem)
  – Drove out Christian pilgrims

• 1095 Pope Urban II received a plea from the Byzantine Emperor to help with the Muslim invasion

• The church called all Christians in Europe to unite and recapture the holy land
  – Was promised salvation
• “Crusade” means “war of the cross”
  – Flag was a red cross with a white banner
• Many participants died of hunger or disease on the way to the Holy Land
• Several crusades were fought for the next 200 years
English Political Traditions

• England developed traditions of liberty and limited self-government

• MAGNA CARTA 1215
  – English nobles rebelled against King John on taxes and forced loans
  – King John was forced to sign an agreement
    • Not to take away a free man’s property or imprison a man without procedures
    • Free men the right to a trial by jury
    • Consent of the council of nobles for new taxes

• PARLIAMENT
  – Later English Kings would call nobles and representatives of the towns to grant them new taxes