Byzantium

Dates: 330-1453

May 11, 330 – “New Rome” or Constantinople is established

May 29, 1453– Byzantine Empire falls to the Ottomans, ending a reign that lasted 1,123 years
(It was a Tuesday; this is why Tuesday is considered an unlucky day in Greece)
Ch. 8 - Late Antiquity

• Look at *The Life of Jesus in Art*

• Learn these stories & images! As we move into Medieval, Renaissance and Baroque society, these will be the main images we will deal with.

• New images will be introduced, variations of the same image will occur, but *this list makes up a significant portion of what is to come*. 
Constantinople

- **Current name:** Istanbul  
  **Languages:** Latin; after 640 AD Koine Greek  
  **Religion:** Christianity and later Eastern Orthodox

- *Constantinople* was founded by Constantine I in 330. It sat at the entrance to the Black Sea, was along the path of the silk road and lay at the crossroads between Asia and Europe.

- During the 6th century Justinian I became emperor and would have a lasting influence in both the East & West. He decorated Constantinople with beautiful monasteries and churches such as the Hagia Sophia and the Church of Holy Wisdom. In the West, he decorated Ravenna with the mosaics found at San Vitale.

- Constantinople survived attacks from barbarian invasions in the 5th century, the Avars and Bulgars in the 7th century and was able to hold off the Persians and Arabs for hundreds of years. This helped the Roman Empire and the rest of Europe grow and flourish without the worry of invading armies from the Middle-East.

- The fall of Constantinople also attributed greatly to the Renaissance. Greek scholars fled to Italy and brought with them Greek manuscripts, and knowledge of the classical Greek literature. This work had previously been lost for centuries in the West in what is known as The Dark Ages.
Late Antiquity
(Early Byzantine, 527-726)

Justinian as the triumphant victor.

Historical document, has the name of Frankish kings inscribed on the back.

Combination of Classical & Christian figures.

Justinian as world conqueror (Barberini Ivory), mid 6th century
Terminology

• Narthex – entrance/lobby, at the end of the nave
• Nave – central & principal part of a Christian church
• Altar – an elevated place where offerings/sacrifices are made/religious rites
• Latin Cross Plan (vs. Greek Cross Plan)
• Longitudinal plan (vs. Central plan)
• Mosaic – small pieces of glass (tesserae) use to create an image
Sant’Apollinare in Classe

Saint, cross of Constantine (with image of Christ in center), prophets Elijah and Moses, hand of God, 3 sheep symbolizing 3 disciples

Saint Apollinaris amid sheep, apse mosaic, Sant’Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 533-549
San Vitale

• Located on the Adriatic coast of Italy.
• Church was begun in 527 while Italy was ruled by the Ostrogoths.
  – Only church built during Justinian I’s reign that stands virtually the same as when it was built.
• One of the most elaborate buildings decorated in the early Christian Byzantine style in the West.
  – Mostly mosaics. It is the largest and best preserved outside of Constantinople.
  – Mostly Old Testament figures/stories.
  – Panels depicting Justinian and Theodora.
San Vitale, Ravenna (Italy)

Aerial view of San Vitale (looking northwest), Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.
Interior of San Vitale (looking from the apse into the choir), Ravenna, Italy, 526–547
Choir and apse of *San Vitale* with mosaic of Christ between two angels, Saint Vitalis, and Bishop Ecclesius, Ravenna, Italy, 526–547.
Justinian, Bishop Maximianus, and attendants, mosaic on the north wall of the apse, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547.

The clergy is on Justinian’s left, soldiers on the right. Justinian is centered to emphasize he is the leader of Church and State. He also appears Christ-like with the halo.
Theodora and attendants, mosaic on the south wall of the apse, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547. She is shown with jewels, crown and a golden halo; she appears goddess-like. It shows the women going into the church.
Hagia Sophia

Plan *(top)* and restored cutaway view *(right)* of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532-537
Interior of Hagia Sophia (looking southwest), Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, 532–537
Transfiguration of Jesus, apse mosaic, Church of the Virgin, Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, Egypt, ca. 548–56

Jesus became radiant, spoke with Moses and Elijah, and was called "Son" by a voice in the sky, assumed to be God the Father. It is one of the miracles of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.
Saint Michael the Archangel, right leaf of a diptych, early 6th century.

Angel w/wings = Greek/Roman personification of Victory. Michael carries the orb & cross vs the traditional palm branch. Shown in classical drapery, rejecting rationality and naturalism. Floats in space, free from material world.
Ascension of Christ, folio 13 verso of the Rabbula Gospels, from Zagba, Syria, 586
Crucifixion and Resurrection, folio 13 recto of the *Rabbula Gospels*, from Zagba, Syria, 586
Rabbula Gospels

• The crucifixion takes place against a background of blue mountains (Gareb and Agra). The sun with the eye in the upper part (left) and the moon (right) appear on each side of Christ for this is the hour of darkness and light.
• Near the cross of Christ 3 soldiers gamble for his clothes.
• Jesus is depicted in full royal garments, the Syriac writing on the tablet declares: "This is the King of the Jews."
• To the left of Christ is Longinus holding the lance which pierced the side of Jesus. The man with the sponge on the right side is Steaton who later converted and was martyred.
• To the far right are the 3 women who stood at the cross of Jesus: Mary Magdalene, Salome and Mary the wife of Clopas.
• Dimas the good thief (viewer's left but Christ's right) with his head bent toward Christ is penitent and seeking God's mercy. The Scriptures recount him saying: "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom." To which Jesus responded: "This day you will be with me in paradise." Gestas, the unrepentant thief on the right, has an upturned and proud face. The mark near his lip may indicate an evil spirit.
• Standing near the cross of Dimas is Christ's mother Mary with raised hands covering her tormented face. The Apostle John suffers silently as he looks on with desolate eyes.
Rabbula Gospels

• The resurrection scene in the lower half of the icon actually includes 3 distinct scenes: the empty tomb (Mt 28,2), the women carrying fragrant ointment (left-Mt 28,1), and the appearance of Jesus to the women on the road to Jerusalem (right-Mt 28,9).

• The resurrection scenes are dominated by plush greenery which suggests the new life of resurrection.

• The empty tomb in the shape of a small temple (center) is supported with 2 pink columns to form 2 brackets in the shape of lion’s muzzles. The artist here suggests that the jaws of death cannot contain Christ. The 3 fearful soldiers are held back from the tomb by 3 rays of light seen radiating from the tomb.

• On the left, an angel, carrying a wanderer's staff, sits on the stone, and talks to the women approaching the tomb. The first woman dressed in a royal purple mantle and with a halo alludes to the Mother of Christ. She is holding an alabaster jar; the second woman holds a smoking, cube-shaped censer.

• On the right side, these same women kneel before the Risen Lord.
Iconoclasm

- **726-843 AD**
- Iconoclasm, an ancient Greek word that means "image-breaking," refers to the religious doctrine that forbade the veneration of images (icons) of Christ and the saints in Christian churches.
  - *Iconoclasts*: breakers of images
  - *Iconophiles*: lover of images
- In 726 AD, Emperor Leo III ordered the image of Christ at the Chalke Palace in Constantinople to be destroyed. In the following years, other measures were taken to suppress the veneration of images.
- Empress Theodora, however, presided over the restoration of icon veneration in 843 AD, an event still celebrated by the Orthodox Church as the Triumph of Orthodoxy.
- The iconoclastic movement was motivated by a variety of factors that possibly included foreign influences, as well as the concern that the cult of icons was a form of idolatry. The Council of Nicaea (325) also specified that images should be venerated but not worshipped, since worship belongs to God alone and the worship of icons would mean idolatry.
- Images that survive from this period were preserved at the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mt. Sinai.
Virgin (Theotokos) and Child between Saints Theodore and George, icon, 6th or early 7th century

Christ blessing, icon, 6th century
The restoration of images began in 843.

Mural painters, mosaicists, book illuminators, ivory carvers & metal workers began to receive numerous commissions (leading into what is often referred to as **Middle Byzantine Art, 843-1204**)

*It is in Byzantine Art that images of the Virgin Mary become popular and begin to be included in Christian churches and iconography.*

Virgin (*Theotokos*) and Child enthroned, apse mosaic, Hagia Sophia, Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, dedicated 867
Interior of *Katholikon* (monastery’s main church, looking into the dome), Hosios Loukas, Greece, first quarter of 11th century
Crucifixion, mosaic in the Church of the Dormition, Daphni, Greece, ca. 1090–1100
Notice the gradual strengthening of emotional expression. Figures seem to be coming more alive emotionally, figures dramatize their emotions with gestures and their facial expressions.
Christ as *Pantokrator*, dome mosaic in the **Church of the Dormition**, Daphni, Greece, ca. 1090–1100

*Pantokrator* – ruler of all; almighty, all powerful

This is an example of the developing *expressionism* that is found in later Middle Byzantine Art.
Byzantium in the West

• Byzantine art continued to flourish until c. 13th century; overlaps with the Proto-Renaissance.
  – 4th Crusade (1204) sacked Constantinople, 800 years of continuous Byzantine culture was interrupted.
  – Palaeologan Dynasty saw the last flourish in Byzantine Art, partly because of an increasing cultural exchange between Byzantines and Italians.
  – Mosaics eventually gave way to frescoes.
• In architecture, churches varied between the central and longitudinal plans.
  – One deviation is St. Mark’s Cathedral in Venice which is in the Greek-Cross plan. Here, the focus is on the dome.
  – Relics of St. Mark stolen from Alexandria, Egypt and taken to Venice, Italy in 828. Original church (later burnt down) dates to the 9th c. The present one started in 1063.
St. Mark’s Basilica, Venice (Italy)
Detail, façade of St. Mark’s Basilica, Venice, Italy
Façade mosaic, depicts the procession bringing St. Mark’s relics to Venice.
Interior of Saint Mark’s (looking east), Venice, Italy, begun 1063
Empress Irene, detail of the *Pala d’Oro*, **Saint Mark’s**, Venice, Italy, ca. 1105

**Pala d’Oro** - behind the altar at the Basilica di San Marco; altar screen.
- It’s a gold, enamel and jewel-encrusted altarpiece made in Constantinople for Doge Pietro Orseolo I in 976. It was then enriched and reworked in Constantinople in 1105, enlarged by Venetian goldsmiths in 1209 and reset in the 14th century.
- Among the almost 2000 stones that decorate it are 526 pearls, 320 emeralds, rubies, amethysts, sapphires, jasper, topaz and coralline
Pantokrator, Theotokos and Child, angels, and saints, apse mosaic in the cathedral at Monreale, (Sicily) Italy, ca. 1180–1190.
Interior (looking west) of the Cappella Palatina, Palermo, Sicily, begun 1142
Ivory Carving - Christ enthroned with saints (*Harbaville Triptych*), ca. 950
David composing the Psalms, folio 1 verso of the *Paris Psalter*, ca. 950–970

**Allegorical** - a symbolic representation of something
Lamentation over the dead Christ, wall painting, Saint Pantaleimon, Nerezi, Macedonia, 1164
Christ as Savior of Souls, icon from the church of Saint Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, early 14th century
Anastasis, apse fresco in the parekklesion of the Church of Christ in Chora (now the Kariye Museum), Constantinople (Istanbul), Turkey, ca. 1310–1320.
Anastasis (Resurrection) fresco in the parekklesion of the Chora Church, 1310-1320

Parekklesion- mortuary chapel for family burials and memorials.
Large sakkos of Photius, ca. 1417. Satin embroidered with gold and silver thread and silk with pearl ornament
Annunciation, reverse of two-sided icon from Saint Clement, Ohrid, Macedonia, early 14th century
Three angels (Old Testament Trinity), ca. 1410