Byzantines and Islamic Civilization

- Herakleios (610 to 641) ushered in a new and distinctive dynasty
  - constant warfare with Persians weakens both empires
  - open door to Arabs
- By the 630s, however, a new political and religious group had begun to emerge in the Middle East and Near East—Islam.
Islam began c. 610 when Prophet Muhammad, (s.a.w.) a merchant from Mecca, had a vision

The angel Gabriel spoke to him and said “Read...read in the name of thy Lord who creates man from a clot”

This is the first of many messages from God that Prophet Muhammad received for his contemplation. They form the Qur’an

Spread of Islamic Faith

• Muhammad preaches in Mecca
  - tells the people to give up their idols and submit to the one and indivisible God
  - unpopular among the leaders of Mecca, whose prosperity was tied to guardianship of the Ka’ba, a polytheistic sanctuary
• Muhammad and followers move to Medina
  - grow in numbers and power
  - Qur’an written in Medina concerned with practical problems of living together in community
• Muhammad then invades Mecca
  - made capital
  - turns Ka’ba into Islamic shrine
The *Qur'an*

- in Arabic means “reading” or “recitation”
- The *Qur'an* is considered by Muslims to be a book of divine revelation
- The *Qur'an* is the cornerstone of Muslim faith, practice, and law
- Provides guidelines for social welfare, family and inheritance laws, and proper behavior within the framework of a just and equitable society
The central miracle of Islam is God’s revelation to Muhammad
- revealed over a period of more than two decades in two places
- Muhammad’s human fallibilities as a mere mortal are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur’an
- contains 114 Arabic chapters (suras) of varying length.
- The opening sura is called the Fatiha, a short prayer or invocation for many situations

Hadith: الحديث

• Hadith or “tradition”
  • includes accounts of the sayings, deeds, and thoughts of the Prophet and is superseded in importance only by the Qur’an
  • Restrictions on figurative arts are not found in the Qur’an but are in the Hadith

Sunnah سنة plural سنن (sunan)

• In general, the word Sunnah means habit, practice, customary procedure, or action, norm and usage sanctioned by tradition.
• In specific, any time the word Sunnah is mentioned, it is to refer to Prophet Muhammad. Here it means his sayings, practices, living habits. The Hadith are reports on the Sunnah.
• The two major legal sources of jurisprudence in Islam are the Qur’an and the Sunnah.
• The Sunnah has a high authority in Islam; and Allah in many places in the Qur’an orders the Muslims to follow the teachings of Prophet Mohammad.
A Trip to Mecca (hajj):

- The once-in-a-lifetime trip to Mecca is a requirement for all Muslims who are able.
- During the five day trip, people dress in white (to stress equality) and visit holy sites, including the Grand Mosque and Ka‘aba.
- Muslims believe that Abraham built the Ka‘aba out of black granite to honor God and then initiated the hajj.
- About 2.4 million Muslims attended the Hajj in 2009 (Saudi News Agency).

The Ka‘aba in Mecca
The Rashidun Caliphate

- Islamic leaders called Caliphs in this early period
  - Four good Caliphs
- Various dynasties arose that controlled different geographic regions, so the Islamic world was rarely united
- Arabic remained the only accepted language of religious expression in Islam, and even to this day the Qur'an cannot be translated if it is to be used for religious purposes

- 632 The Prophet dies
- 634 Islam becomes force of conversion in Arabia and much of Palestine
- 637 Jerusalem captured
  - surrendered by Patriarch Sophonias.
- 637 Muslims capture Syria
- Gaza
- Byzantine authorities in Egypt and Mesopotamia purchased an expensive truce, which lasted three years for Egypt and one year for Mesopotamia
- Antioch falls
- Muslims occupied whole of the northern Syria, except for upper Mesopotamia, which they granted a one-year truce
- 639-9 Muslims overrun
  - Byzantine Mesopotamia
  - Byzantine Armenia
  - complete conquest of Palestine by storming Caesarea
  - capture of Ashkelon
- 640 Muslims invade Egypt
Siege of Constantinople (674–678)

674 Umayyad Caliph Muawiyah I sends his son Yazid to besiege Constantinople
  – Emperor Constantine IV (652-85)
  • unable to breach the Theodosian Walls, blockaded the city along the Bosporus.
  • besiegers withdraw
677 Byzantine navy deploys “Greek Fire” to defeat the Umayyad navy in the Sea of Marmara, lifting the siege in 678.
711
Islam spreads into central Asia, India, North Africa, & Spain
— Spain remains Muslim until 1492

717-18
Byzantines check expansion at Constantinople
— would battle Muslims until the 15th century

732
Islamic conquests checked in France by Charles Martel

Battle of Tours

Establishment of Isaurian Dynasty

March 717
• Strategos of the Anatolian Theme and the Armenian Theme lead coup
  — Leo III (r. 717-41)
    • first emperor to support Iconoclasm

August 717
  — second siege under Suleman Abd al-Malik
  — horrible famine
    • 12 months

August 718
  — Bulgars attacked Abd al-Malik’s army
The Qur'an, Hadith, and Art

- The Qur'an is the cornerstone of Muslim faith, practice, and law
- It provides guidelines for social welfare, family and inheritance laws, and proper behavior within the framework of a just and equitable society
- The Qur'an does not speak against the creation of figural images, only the making of idols
- Restrictions on figurative arts are, however, found in another body of literature known as Hadith, or "tradition"
- Hadith includes accounts of the sayings, deeds, and thoughts of the Prophet and is superseded in importance only by the Qur'an

A page of the Qur'an from 10th century Tunisia (blue parchment with gold lettering)