

## **L-5: The Byzantine Empire (p. 196-199)**

After the Western Roman Empire fell in 476 AD., the Eastern part continued  
We call it: The Byzantine Empire. The most famous emperor was named Justinian I, who ruled from 527-565 AD. He wanted to re-establish the Roman Empire in the Mediterranean.

Under Justinian I, the Byzantines:

- 1 Re-gained much territory of the old Roman Empire (most was lost after his death)
- 2 Codified old Roman Law: The Body of Civil Law was the last product of Eastern Roman culture to be written in Latin. It is often referred to as Justinian's Code - it was the basis of law in the Eastern Roman Empire. It has had great influence on many other legal systems.

However, the Byzantines (like the Romans) had many serious problems:

- 1 too much territory made it difficult to protect and communicate
- 2 little \$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$ in the treasury
- 3 attacks from Persia in the east and from Slavs in the north
- 4 conflict between the Roman Catholic Church in the west and the Eastern Orthodox Church in Byzantium. The conflict was mainly due to a disagreement over Papal authority. This caused a SCHISM or break between the two branches of Christianity.
- 5 The rise of Islam. This was a powerful new force that was threatening the eastern part of the empire.

The Byzantine Empire was a Christian state that spoke Greek. Latin, which had always been spoken in Italy during the Roman Empire, fell into disuse. Greek became the official language. Other characteristics:

- 1 The Emperor's authority was absolute
- 2 Constantinople was the largest city in Europe and was the center of trade
- 3 Justinian initiated incredible building projects like the Hagia Sophia
- 4 Revival: in the 10th-11th centuries under the Macedonian emperors, the Byzantines increased in prosperity for a while, until power struggles caused decline.

