

A Living History  
of Our World

# THE WORLD'S STORY 2

## THE MIDDLE AGES

THE FALL OF ROME THROUGH  
THE RENAISSANCE



ANGELA O'DELL



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Giovanni di Paolo's *Paradise*, 1445.

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# INTRODUCTION

Most of us think about castles and knights when we hear the words the *Middle Ages*. Although these images *are* representative of this time period, there are also many other interesting events, influential historical figures, and world culture changes to study in order to see more of the whole picture. As we work our way through this volume covering what history calls the Middle Ages, you will discover that the Christian Church was one of the most influential powers of this era. This power is what I want to focus on in this introduction.

In the first volume of this series, *The World's Story 1, the Ancients*, we learned about the beginning of the world, how God created everything, including the first man and his wife, and how sin first entered into the picture. We studied the civilizations that rose and fell, and we followed the story of God's chosen people, the Israelites. We spent time learning the historical facts surrounding the culmination of the redemption story. We watched our Savior and friend, Jesus Christ, dying a terrible death to take the penalty of our sin, and finally bursting forth from the grave, conquering the power of death on our behalf.

As Jesus left His followers to return to His Father's right hand, He sent two angels to give this promise to His disciples who were standing with their mouths ajar in wonder at the sight. Acts 1:9–11 says this: "After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!'" (NLT). After the Holy Spirit that Jesus had promised came to the disciples, they all went out preaching and praising God, and the Scriptures said that many were added to the Church.

As months turned into years and years into centuries, the Christian Church gained powerful influence and prestige. This power was often abused by men who wielded the name of Christianity like a lethal weapon, beating those under their authority into submission. In this volume, you will come across many instances where I have written these words: *forced to convert to Christianity*. I cannot tell you how many times, as my fingers tapped out those words on my keyboard, my heart shivered. Each and every time I saw those words form on my computer screen, I felt the sadness of the Holy Spirit within me, and I knew that I needed to write to you about it.



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The very essence of Christianity, or Christ-following, is based on the premise of personal relationship with God — a relationship based on free will. When Christ allowed Himself to be crucified on that Cross, His blood became the atonement needed to wash away the sins of the world. Through His death and Resurrection, we have access to the very throne room of Almighty God. We each have to decide that we want to put God on the throne of our life and live to please Him. *This* is being a Christian, and it is an extremely personal choice. No one can force someone to kneel their hearts and souls before their Maker. God Himself does not force us to worship Him; He asks us to do so and pursues us with His redeeming love because He knows He made us to be satisfied by only Him. It really is as simple as that.

When rituals replace relationship, religion becomes dead, empty, and potentially dangerous. Jesus said this to the Pharisees in Mark 7:6–8: “Jesus replied, ‘You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you, for he wrote, “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship is a farce, for they teach man-made ideas as commands from God.” For you ignore God’s law and substitute your own tradition’” (NLT).

When you are reading the stories in this volume, I want you to remember that there have always been — and still are — humans who try to use the mighty name of Christ to gain control over other humans and to greedily gain worldly wealth. I also want you to remember that throughout history, from the time of Christ’s gift of redemption, there have been true followers of Christ. You will read about many of these true followers in this volume. It was an honor and a privilege to tell you the stories of some of my favorite heroes of the faith who lived in the Middle Ages. In writing this section of our world’s story, I have worked diligently and prayed fervently that God would guide me in teaching about this time period, which involves many difficult events, as well as wonderful world-changing happenings and characters. I understand that there are many types of families reading this story together, and I will do my best not to portray Christian church history from any particular angle or bias.

C.S. Lewis, the author of the beloved *The Chronicles of Narnia*, once said this in his book *Mere Christianity*, “[h]uman history [is] . . . the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy” (Lewis 2009, Book 2, Chapter 3). I couldn’t agree more. Humanity — what an indescribable jumble of all things good and terrible, so much so that I reach out to you with the comfort of this reassurance from our God and King: “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world” (John 16:33; NLT).

I pray that you will see the hand of God as you learn about the Middle Ages.

All dates are A.D. unless specifically noted as B.C.

# 01



## START HERE

The time period that we know as ancient history had come to a close. Christ Jesus had come and fulfilled His divine purpose here on this earth. He had died, resurrected, and ascended back to His place at the right hand of His Father. In the decades after these miraculous and prophecy-fulfilling events, the disciples and followers of Christ spread the good news of the Gospel, and the Early Christian Church was formed. A few centuries later, Rome, the world power that reigned supreme during the time of Christ, was teetering on the brink of destruction. Generations before, the famous Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, had dreamed about the rise and fall of the major world kingdoms; his dream depicting history as a giant statue, which was comprised of various types of metals, had thus far come to fruition. The iron legs of the statue depicted an incredibly powerful kingdom that would stand for an extended length of time and leave a lasting influence on future empires. This kingdom, the Roman Empire, would split before it fell. In this chapter, we will look closely at this devastating crash that would set the tone for centuries to come. After the fall of Rome, humankind had stepped into the Middle Ages, which is the time period we will study together in this volume. It spans from the fall of Rome in 476 to the end of the Renaissance in about 1600.

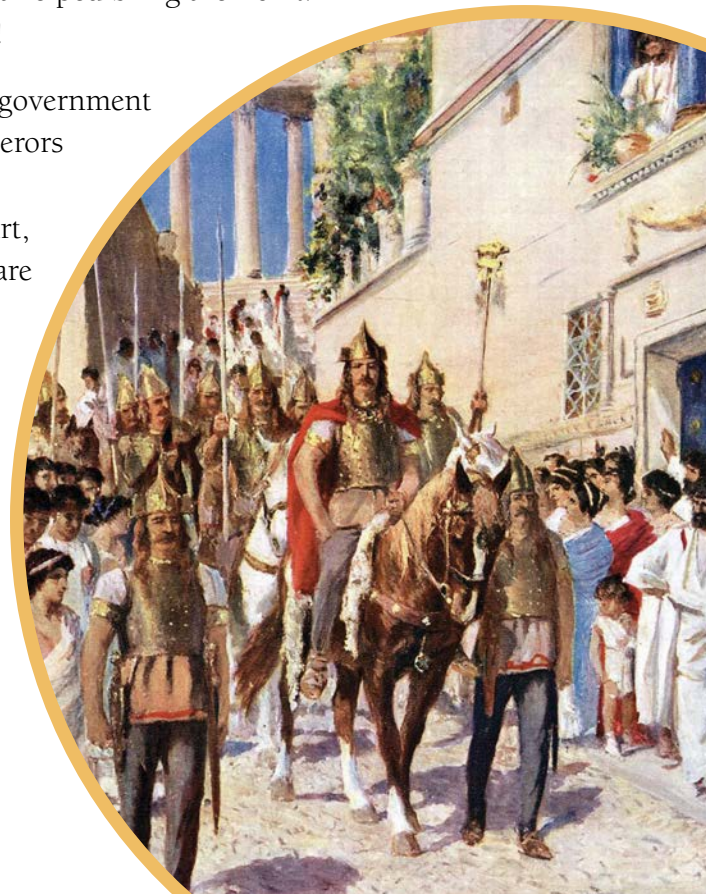
# THE FALL OF ROME

If you have studied ancient history like we did in the first volume of this series, you'll remember that Rome was a mighty empire. It included large portions of the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa and ruled millions of people. In fact, the empire was so big that it was eventually divided between a western half of the empire and an eastern half. The Eastern Roman Empire was ruled from a city in modern-day Turkey called Constantinople. This city was made the capital by an emperor named Constantine in 331. The western half of the Roman empire included the ancient city of Rome, though it was no longer officially the capital. Nevertheless, Rome remained an extremely important city.

Though the Roman Empire was still large, it had an abundance of problems. One problem was its size; it was so big that there really wasn't a good way to protect it. The very size of the empire became its downfall. There were many additional problems plaguing the Roman Empire at this time, however, including diseases the Roman army brought back from other places in the ancient world. These terrible epidemics killed thousands upon thousands of people, therefore weakening the army and the civilian population. Another problem was the Roman army stopped relying on Romans to fill their ranks. They instead began recruiting foreign mercenaries — soldiers who fight for money. These mercenaries were not as loyal to the Roman Empire as Roman armies in the past had been simply because they were not Roman. In fact, many members of the so-called barbarian tribes that helped bring the Roman Empire down had previously served in the Roman military!

Roman society and the economy were a mess, as well. The government was unstable and extremely corrupt, with many of the emperors only ruling for a matter of years or months before being overthrown and replaced by someone else. For the most part, these emperors were not sincerely concerned with taking care of the people under their control. Instead, they were more interested in how much money they could get from their position. The government had also unwisely overspent its money on wars and other expenses. The people of the empire were heavily taxed to help make up for this, but the result also made the financial gap between the rich and the poor even worse.

1920s illustration of Visigoth King Alaric entering Athens, Greece





Another consequence of the economic problems was that the empire no longer had the money to maintain its infrastructure. In its early history, Rome was justifiably famous for the quality of its roads, which spanned the entire empire. Its later economic difficulties meant there was no longer enough money to maintain these roads, so they fell into disrepair. In years past, Rome's excellent roads had aided trade and the mighty Roman army, but now, its crumbling conditions made it harder to transport goods and soldiers long distances.

Another significant issue was recurring invasions from barbarians. This was the term Romans used for people who were not Roman citizens. If you read Volume 1 in this series, you might remember reading about Attila the Hun, who led his army of barbarians against Rome. Attila was defeated before he could reach Rome, but other barbarians did successfully attack the city of Rome. At the height of the Roman Empire in centuries past, such an attack would have seemed unthinkable, but now, they became a recurring issue. Each time, the city was sacked, which meant that its valuables were looted and taken away.



In 410, a Germanic tribe called the Visigoths sacked the city. Forty-five years later, the city was sacked by another Germanic tribe called the Vandals. Finally, in 476, the city of Rome was sacked by still another Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths. The fall of Rome is usually dated to this event because Rome fell into

The Visigoth king, Alaric I, leads the first sack of Rome in 410.

Juan de la Corte's depiction of a Roman siege, 1600s





a period of Germanic rule. Other times when Rome was sacked, a Roman emperor remained in charge, but that was no longer true after 476. There was never another Roman emperor ruling the western half of the empire after this point. The once mighty empire had fallen.

As you can probably imagine, the last days of the Western Roman Empire were very difficult for the people who lived there. Even though life was always hard, it was still a great shock when the once-powerful empire collapsed, especially at the hands of barbarians, whom most Romans considered inferior and uncivilized. When the dust settled after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, panic began to set in. The conquering barbarians had excellent sacking skills, but they lacked the ability to set up a functioning replacement government.

There was no longer a central government; therefore, there were no schools or law enforcement officers. No one knew who would lead them, teach them, or protect them. Roman money was no longer issued, and the old Roman coins were worth nothing more than the metal they were made of. Suddenly, even people who had been rich became poor overnight. Can you imagine how frightening and uncertain this would be? It was a very difficult time, and we'll learn more about what happened because of the fall of Rome in the next chapter, but first, we'll check in with the eastern half of the Roman Empire.

### NARRATION BREAK:

Discuss what you learned about the fall of Rome.

19th century Dutch painter Charles Rochussen's scene showing Romans interacting with the Germanic Batavi tribe. The Batavi were barbarian allies of the Romans.



The Eastern Roman Empire had also been subject to the attacks, but they had managed to ward off the barbarians. Even though they lost a large portion of land to the barbarians, and their empire shrank to the area directly surrounding Constantinople, the Eastern Empire survived.

We call this surviving part of the Roman Empire the Byzantine (BIZ-in-teen) Empire. It was called that because Constantinople's ancient name was Byzantium. The Byzantine Empire may have started out small, but it certainly did not stay that

way. Eventually, strong emperors came to the Byzantine throne. These emperors fought and conquered sections of the surrounding area until the Byzantine Empire was soon spreading far beyond Constantinople.

One of the most powerful Byzantine emperors was Justinian. Emperor Justinian was not born into a royal family in 483; in fact, he was not even from a rich, influential family. Justinian grew up as a poor country boy. His parents were farmers, and they worked hard to feed their family. Justinian's mother had a brother named Justin, who was a high-ranking officer in the imperial guard. Uncle Justin knew that his nephew needed an education to have a good future. So, it was that Justinian was taken to Constantinople, where there were many renowned institutions of education. After he finished school, Justinian decided to go into the army. Everyone liked this bright, organized young man. He was helpful to his officers, and he gained respect for his bravery. As you might expect from such a young man, he moved quickly up through the ranks in the army.

It just so happened that there was a lovely young woman named Theodora who lived in Constantinople. Theodora had grown up in a family who owned a circus. From a very young age, Theodora worked with the animals in the circus. She led a wild and ungodly life, but when she grew up, Theodora became a Christian. She decided to move to Constantinople to live a quiet, useful life.

Valentine Cameron's  
19th century painting of  
Empress Theodora





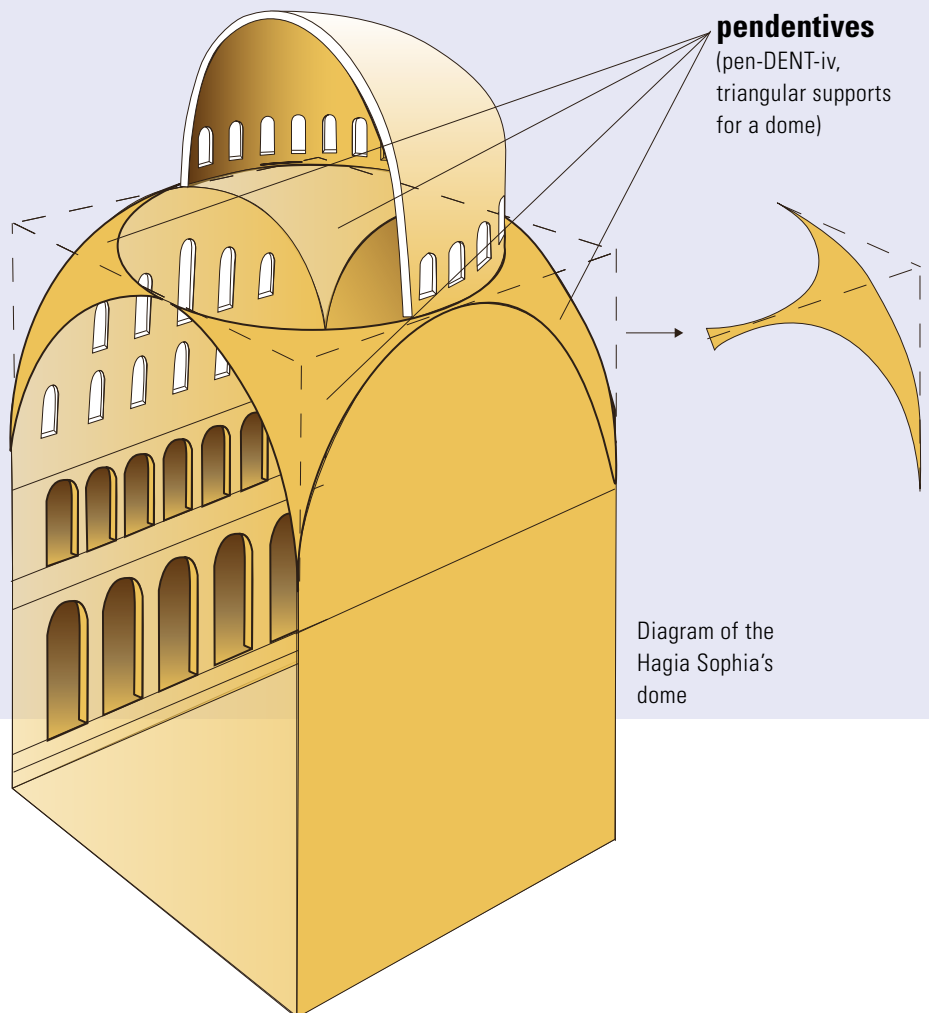
## CONNECT

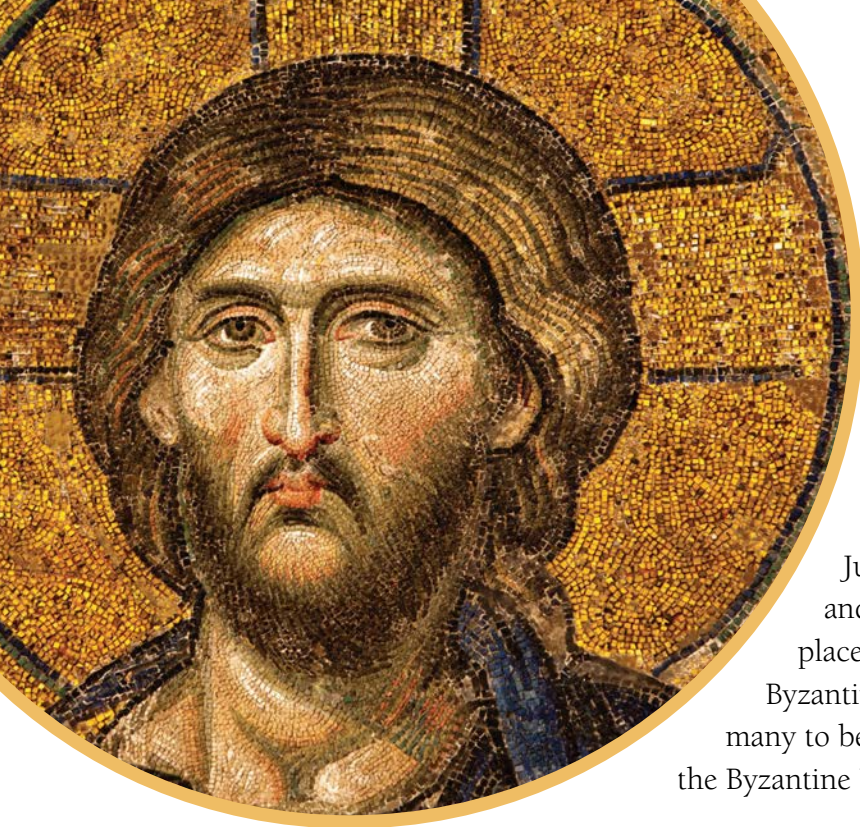
If you were to travel to the beautiful Old City part of modern-day Istanbul, you would be visiting the city once called Constantinople.

There are many awe-inspiring aspects of this city, with one of the most obvious being the architecture. The structures of Constantinople that were built in the early years of the Byzantine Empire are varied in style. Many of them have a flavor of the Roman style of building, while others are more reminiscent of other nearby civilizations of Asia Minor, which were uninfluenced by Roman architecture.

You and I are quite accustomed to the style of buildings popular in our time and country. Much of the architecture we are exposed to is only a couple of centuries old at the most, and although there are many different styles of houses and buildings in our cities or neighborhoods, they all have somewhat similar lines and layouts. This is not the case with the buildings of the Byzantine Empire! Their mix of traditional Roman or Greek-influenced architecture with more interesting and individual styles creates a unique skyline. One of the most amazing architectural examples is the Hagia Sophia. This gorgeous cathedral was built during the 6th century, while Justinian I was emperor, for Eastern Orthodox Christians to worship in, and it is still considered the most important Byzantine architectural structure. Byzantine cathedrals like the Hagia Sophia were specifically designed to be ornate and magnificent because Eastern Christians believed that was one way to honor God.

If we were to walk into this fabulous architectural wonder, we would be awestruck. The building's architects were also well known for their mechanical skills and mathematical knowledge (Brooks 2009). These ingenious architects designed the cathedral to combine a long, rectangular central building with a huge 32-meter (nearly 105 feet) dome roof. Study the illustration to see how they supported a circular dome roof over a rectangular building.





Byzantine mosaic  
of Jesus in the  
Hagia Sophia

One day, Justinian, who was at this time a soldier in the army, rode through the streets of Constantinople. He saw Theodora standing by the side of the road. He was enthralled by her beauty and asked about her. No one knew who she was, so Justinian searched and searched until he found out where her home was. When he had finally found her, Justinian asked her to marry him.

Justinian's uncle eventually became the emperor, and when he died, Justinian became ruler in his place. Theodora then became the empress of the Byzantine Empire. Empress Theodora is thought by many to be the most powerful woman in the history of the Byzantine Empire.

After he became emperor, Justinian did not like the fact that his empire was so small, so he decided to do something about it. After building up his army, he set out to conquer the lands that used to belong to the empire but had been lost. This increased the size of the empire, and soon, the Byzantine Empire was the leading power in the world. He also increased taxes, though, and that made many people unhappy.

Justinian also worked to remove corruption from the government. One of his most famous achievements was the Code of Justinian. Shortly after becoming emperor, Justinian ordered the laws of the empire to be written down. This would be a good way to make sure everyone living in the empire knew what the laws were. In the process, the laws were also updated and revised. This was a huge undertaking that required several years to complete. Even though many of the laws were not new at all, the result of this project became known as the Code of Justinian. For centuries afterward, these laws (known as Roman law) formed the foundation of the legal system of most European kingdoms. Even modern American law is still influenced by Roman law and, by extension, the Code of Justinian.

Things did not always work out smoothly, however. Chariot racing was very popular in Constantinople, and the fans could be unruly, to say the least. When some of them got in trouble, their friends became angry and started a terrible uprising in the city. The uprising was called the Nika Riots and was so bad that it almost forced Justinian to flee Constantinople; however, Theodora convinced him to stay.

There was so much wealth in the Byzantine culture that the glory that was Rome paled in comparison. The Byzantine children attended school to learn from the philosophers of the day. They were taught by strict professors, who oversaw the educational process with a watchful eye. The architectural glory in the city of



Constantinople was astounding; there were beautiful palaces, schools, and churches in abundance. Homes were emblazoned with mosaics made of precious stones, gold, and colorful glass.

As we will learn more about in the next chapter, both the Western and Eastern Roman Empires eventually became Christian. The most famous and beautiful church in Constantinople was called the Hagia Sophia (HAZSH-ee-uh so-FEE-uh). This church was actually a great cathedral, with huge, open spaces, beautiful windows, intricate mosaics, and huge domes. Indeed, it is considered an architectural wonder of the world.

### NARRATION BREAK:

Talk about what you read about the Byzantine Empire.



There was a great controversy among the Christians of the Byzantine Empire over whether or not to use icons (depictions of saints and religious figures that are revered). Some—called iconoclasts (eye-con-uh-CLASTS)—saw the practice was not Scriptural and destroyed the icons. This is one of many disputes over doctrine and practice that affected the Christian church during the Middle Ages.



After the Western Roman Empire collapsed, barbarian kingdoms rose in many parts of Europe. The barbarians had migrated there from Eastern Europe. "Barbarian" was the term the Romans used to describe anyone who was not a Roman citizen. The people they were describing as barbarians did not call themselves barbarians. They instead considered themselves a member of their individual tribe. For instance, members of the Visigoth tribes would think of themselves as Visigoths, not as barbarians. It is also important to remember that even though the Romans looked down on the barbarians for their different customs, many of these barbarians adopted Roman customs. In fact, within a couple of centuries, most of the formerly pagan barbarians had become Christians! We will be learning about several of these kingdoms that rose after the fall of Rome throughout this book, including the Angles, the Saxons, the Jutes, the Franks, the Vandals, and the Visigoths.

### ANALYZE

How much of Western Europe was under the control of the barbarian kingdoms? (Hint: Only the Eastern Roman Empire on the map is not barbarian.)

### CONNECT

Based on what you read in this chapter, why did the Eastern Roman Empire not collapse when the Western one did?



If you were with me in the first volume of this series, you will remember how we learned about the Early Christian Church — the brave men and women who were either eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ or had heard the Gospel from another early follower of the faith and placed their trust in Christ. The Early Church faced incredible persecution from the outside and turmoil from within. Those who did not understand them or outright hated them for this new religion sought to hurt or kill them, and there were also those who attacked it from within by wanting to change the Gospel to what they wanted it to be. God knew that the Early Church needed strong leaders to help guide them through these difficult times. These Early Church leaders have become known in history as the Church Fathers.



One of these Church leaders, Polycarp, who lived about a century after Christ, taught that every believer should protect the Apostles' teachings. This reminds me of the Apostle Paul's words in 2 Timothy 1:5–7: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline" (NIV). We each have the duty to guard the gift of the Gospel. Polycarp endured much persecution in his life, which ended in martyrdom (Jones 2009, 28–29) when he was burned at the stake.

Another Early Church leader who made a deep impact on the medieval church was Augustine in the late 300s and early 400s. Augustine is a wonderful example of how God uses His redeeming love to chase people down. As a young man, Augustine's mother prayed faithfully for her son to turn from the rather wild and sinful life he was so attracted to. God brought the wayward Augustine to His heart and taught Him the power of forgiveness. Augustine founded a monastery, became the bishop of Hippo, and became known in history as a brilliant theologian.



Polycarp



Saint Augustine by Philippe de Champaigne





## BYZANTINE CONSTANTINOPE

The Hagia Sophia is nearly 1,500 years old and has been a focal point of the city's architecture ever since it was built. For centuries, it was the city's main cathedral. (A cathedral is the seat of an area's bishop and is the most prestigious church in the area.) After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, it became one of the city's chief mosques (MAWSK). Now, it is one of Istanbul's most popular museums.



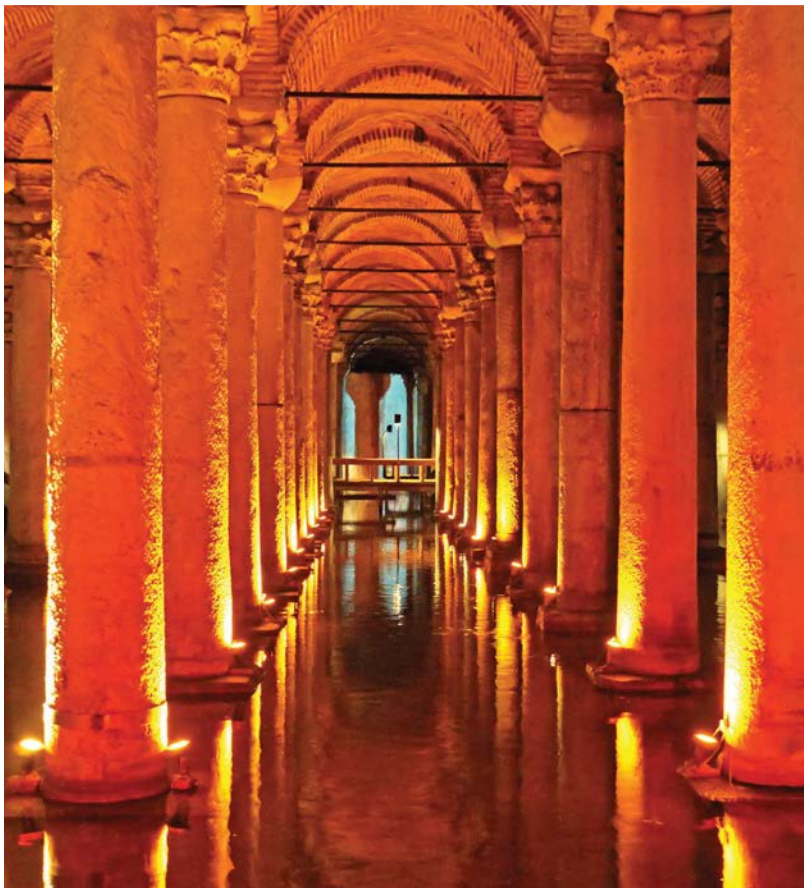
The Grand Palace was where the Byzantine emperors lived for centuries; however, the site is now in ruins. But its mosaics, such as this one, have been preserved. Byzantine mosaics were unusual because they usually went on walls rather than floors.





Though the Hagia Sophia is the most famous of the city's churches, it is not the only one. The Hagia Irene remains one of the few Byzantine-era churches that was not converted into a mosque, though it eventually was turned into a museum.

The interior of the Hagia Sophia.



Justinian also built the Basilica Cistern. It stored water for the city and Justinian's Palace, but it was forgotten for many years before being rediscovered in the 1600s. Though it is empty now, the cistern can hold hundreds of tons of water.

The Byzantine Empire is noted for its mosaics. The Hagia Sophia includes many of these artworks, as well. It was common for the mosaics to include images of the emperors alongside religious figures. This one shows Jesus and Mary with the emperors Justinian and Constantine on either side. On the left, Justinian is showing them the Hagia Sophia. On the right, Constantine presents them with the city of Constantinople.





# 10

## START HERE

You have probably noticed that throughout the study of history, there are varying degrees of history-changing (or history-making) people. Some of these history-changers are responsible for wonderful contributions to mankind while some are infamous because of their degree of terribleness. Still others brought wide-sweeping changes to entire cultures through conquest and raiding.

It is important for us to remember that although kings and rulers rise and fall, bringing blessing or disaster to their people, God is the ruler of all and will have the last say. Read what Psalm 22:27-28 says: “The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him. For royal power belongs to the Lord. He rules all the nations” (NLT).

In this chapter, we are going to become acquainted with a man who meets the criteria for being a history-changer. Genghis Khan became known in history as the Mongol leader who conquered a huge portion of the continent of Asia and even reached into Europe. His descendants also conquered and ruled vast areas, and the Mongol Empire greatly influenced the history of the world.



# THE KHANS, GENGHIS AND KUBLAI

To the north of China, in a freezing-cold region with both mountains and plateaus, there lived a nomadic tribe of people called the Mongols. They lived in heavy felt tents and wandered the frozen land, eating animals that they killed when they stopped to sleep. The Mongol way of life and culture centered around fighting and strength training. Even from young ages, the boys were encouraged to develop battle skills and agility. They loved games involving horse-riding, archery, and wrestling. Mostly, the Mongols raided villages along the border. They robbed merchants and stole goods, but they did not usually venture deep into China. This all changed when a new leader named Genghis Khan (geen-gis KAWN) came along.

He was born in 1162 with the name Temüjin (ti-MOO-jen), the son of a tribal chieftain, though he experienced several years of poverty during his childhood after the death of his father. Temüjin quickly became a leader of his people and began working toward uniting the Mongols. The first step in Temüjin's plan was to conquer the other Mongol tribes so that he could be the one Mongol leader. After defeating other Mongol tribes, Temüjin would kill the leaders but incorporate the rest of the tribe into his own group. This brutal tactic ensured that there was no rival leader but that the people were loyal to him. Another way he gained loyalty was by promoting his most capable allies to positions of power rather than his own relatives. This broke with Mongol custom but guaranteed loyalty and competent rule. Soon, Temüjin was the leader of all his people. He then became known as Genghis Khan, which meant "universal ruler."

Next, Genghis Khan and his army of Mongols swept down from the north across the Chinese border, like a mighty wave of destruction. When they first attacked in 1209, they seized a kingdom in the northwest portion of the country. They burned and pillaged everything in their path, and within five years, Genghis and his army had conquered another kingdom in China, the Jins, and their capital of Zhongdu (modern-day Beijing).

Genghis then turned his attention toward the west. There rested the Khwarazmian (KAH-raz-mee-an) dynasty, a Muslim kingdom that had ruled Central Asia for about 150 years. Genghis and his army struck fear into the heart of everyone they came across. The Khwarazmian army didn't know how to handle these warriors. The Mongols so frightened people that many times the invaded



Depiction of Genghis Khan and his Mongol army



15th century depiction of the Mongol siege of Beijing



14th century illustration of Marco Polo's caravan to the East

people would lie down and give up without even a fight! Genghis Khan was an extremely battle-smart leader. With his well-trained, fast-moving, and completely ruthless army, he executed a series of amazing and outstanding campaigns.

The Mongols' empire spread, as did their terrible and fearful reputation. People were terrified of the Mongol army, with good reason. Genghis usually offered people the chance to surrender and pay him tribute, but if they resisted, the Mongols showed no mercy. It is estimated that millions of people were killed by the Mongol army. Genghis Khan was a brutal and violent man, but his reign was not all negative. He created a national mail delivery service and did not try to forcibly convert the people he conquered to his own pagan religion. The Mongols also gained a written alphabet for the first time under his rule.

Genghis Khan had made his terrible, sweeping rampage into China and Central Asia before his death in 1227, and his descendants enlarged the empire even more. They expanded into Eastern Europe, especially in what is now modern Russia, Poland, and Hungary. They also moved through the Middle East, conquering the Abbasid Caliphate and seizing their capital of Baghdad in 1258. Other rival Muslim caliphates ruled locally in places like Spain and Egypt, but general rule by a Muslim caliphate had ended for the time being. By 1260, the Mongol Empire had reached the end of its expansion.

The empire, which was the largest empire up to that time, stretched from the Yellow Sea in the east all the way to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. Once they stopped conquering, things calmed down, and the period became known as the Pax Mongolica, which means Mongolian peace. During this time, trade flourished. One of the most famous merchants to visit East Asia, including Mongolia, during this time was an Italian named Marco Polo. The stories of his travels fascinated people back in Europe.

Marco Polo knew and even worked for Genghis Khan's grandson, Kublai (KEW-bluh) Khan, who also expanded his control to all of China, making himself emperor. He and his army already occupied the modern-day city of Beijing, but he was not





This painting shows the Mongol Khan giving Marco Polo a letter of safe passage as he traveled back to Europe. This letter would serve as protection as Polo made his long journey.

satisfied with that. Kublai Khan pressed farther and farther south, conquering the Chinese cities and villages in his path. The Chinese fought back, using toxic gases to make deadly fogs, but the Mongols eventually overpowered them. After overcoming the Chinese, Kublai Khan set his gaze farther to the east. He sent a message to the Japanese emperor, demanding that Japan surrender and lay down their weapons. The Japanese adamantly refused to surrender without a fight and scoffed at Khan's demands. The Mongols were not used to this reaction to their threats.

The enraged Kublai Khan promptly commanded that a fleet of sturdy ships be built to attack the Japanese. The Mongols sailed for the Japanese islands, determined to beat them into submission. A strong wind commenced to blow, and soon the Mongol ships were being blown back toward China. The Mongols were stunned; they had marched through Korea and had easily conquered it, but this wind seemed almost supernatural! The superstitious Mongols decided to return to China, but many of their ships were sunk, drowning hundreds of soldiers.

Seven years later, the determined Mongols tried again to attack Japan. This time, they brought many more ships and thousands of more warriors. Again, they set sail for Japan. For the second time, strong winds and horrible storms — probably a hurricane — descended on the terrified men in their ships. This storm was even stronger than the first, and its strength was so incredible that many of the Mongol ships had no hope at all of survival. Thousands of Mongol warriors drowned, and their ships capsized. Once again, the Japanese were saved from the Mongols' invasion. Kublai Khan never did conquer Japan, but even so, he ruled the largest empire on earth for over 20 years.

### **NARRATION BREAK:**

Talk about Genghis Khan and the Mongols.





This illustration of Kublai Khan hunting comes from a 15th century French edition of Marco Polo's popular book.

If you were with me in the first volume of this series, you will remember learning about how the Roman Empire swallowed up much of Europe and the Middle East, as well as parts of Asia and Africa. In fact, it was so far-reaching that its very size is what became part of its demise. In some ways, the Mongols were similar to the Romans. Like the Romans, the Mongols swept through much of the known world and conquered the peoples there, setting up their own government and rulers. Unlike the Romans, however, the Mongols were not savvy rulers, and the everyday administrative duties that governing takes were not their strong suit. Because of this, the occupying Mongols slowly but surely adopted the Chinese political and cultural models (Department of Asian Art "Yuan Dynasty," 2001).

It was 1279 when the entirety of China finally fell to the Mongols, under the rule of Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan. For the first time, the Chinese people were not only Chinese, but they were also part of a much larger political entity, the Mongol empire. The Mongols were never completely embraced in China, and rebellions would eventually bring their dynasty to an end. This period in which the Mongols ruled China is called the Yuan dynasty period.

Wang Meng's *Wang Meng Writing Books under the Pine Trees* is a good example of the more personal artwork that developed and thrived during the Yuan dynasty. Meng's style was unique from earlier Chinese art and greatly emphasized the joy of solitary activities. He was more interested in capturing the atmosphere of solitude rather than creating a realistic depiction of a scene.





Let's explore how the Yuan dynasty period was different than the previous dynastic periods. We have learned that the previous dynasties, especially the Tang and Song dynasties, were productive and successful years for Chinese culture, art, poetry, architecture, sculpting, and literature. Printed books were much more common, thanks to a type of movable print printing press, and art was sponsored and encouraged at a government level. The artists of those periods were captivated by elements of nature and religion as their source of inspiration. Paintings of birds and sculptures of the Buddha were common, and the relationship between artisans and their wealthy sponsors was a valued one. This all changed when the Mongols took power.

The Mongols did not sponsor the arts like previous Chinese dynasties had. Because of this, the artisans and the literati, people who are interested and trained in literature and writing, became an ignored societal group. This shift in the Chinese culture moved the artists from a place of prominence and honor to a more hidden and less appreciated level in Chinese society. In turn, this caused the artists, who formerly found inspiration in trying to replicate nature around them, to turn inward for inspiration and expression. The artwork and style of this time were much more personally representative of the artists themselves. Also important to note were the changes in the pottery and ceramics industries of China during this time. In the porcelain world, an exquisite newcomer, blue-and-white ware, which was white porcelain with blue underglaze, made its appearance (Mote 2003, 513). This gorgeous porcelain ware is extremely popular among Western collectors even now (Mote 2003, 513).



Blue-and-white porcelain from the Ming period



Zhao Mengjian's *Three Friends of Winter* is a good example of Song dynasty art. It focuses on 3 plants that are considered symbolic because they thrive during winter: pine, bamboo, and plum. Unlike during the Yuan dynasty, artwork created during earlier dynasties was dictated by strict rules. Painters were expected to follow conventions and imitate old masters rather than developing their own unique style.

# CONNECT

Have you ever played the game “Marco Polo” in a swimming pool? Did you know it is named after a real person? Marco Polo was born in 1254 in Venice, Italy, the son of a merchant. His father was away when Marco was born, and he did not return until Marco was 15 years old. Marco Polo’s father had spent many years working in Asia and had come home on a mission. The Mongol leader ruling China, Kublai Khan, had requested that a group of wise men come and tell him about Christianity. Marco was excited! Maybe his father, who had every intention of returning to China, would allow him to come with him.

At this time, Kublai Khan ruled the Mongol Empire. This was during the Pax Mongolica, the Mongol Peace. After all the years of turmoil and invasion, Kublai wanted things to be calm because that would help trade. He assigned his soldiers to guard the Silk Road because he wanted merchants and visitors to feel safe and welcome as they traveled. The Silk Road was hundreds of miles long, and it passed through mountains and deserts. Water was a precious commodity, only available at the widely scattered oases. Adventurous merchants and explorers who ventured this journey had to be sturdy, strong, and willing to be away from home for years at a time. It took at least three years to travel to the city of Beijing from Italy.



Early 20th century illustration of China during Marco Polo’s time

Marco and his father set out on what would prove to be an extremely difficult journey. Marco became ill and had to rest for long periods of time. It took Marco and his father 4 years for them to complete their journey. Marco stayed in China for a long time — nearly 20 years. Kublai Khan never did convert to Christianity, but he made Marco an official in his kingdom and gave him the job of settling disputes between Chinese officials. When Marco and his father finally returned home, their family members did not recognize them; they thought they had died long ago.

We know about the Polos’ stay in China because Marco told all about it in his book, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, which he actually wrote when he was in jail! (Marco had become caught up in the political turmoil in Italy after his return.) Marco’s book described, in great detail, the palace of Kublai Khan. His words would paint a picture of Asia for the people of Europe, so they could imagine the splendor of the Far East. Though some thought he was lying, others were inspired to travel and see for themselves. To this day, Marco Polo, his journeys, and his writings are still famous.



Eventually, Mongol rule began to collapse. Control fragmented between rival Mongol leaders, and the people they had conquered rebelled and overthrew them. China was no different. When the Mongols were driven out of China in 1368, a new dynasty was established by Zhu Yuanzhang, a native Chinese from humble beginnings. This new dynasty was called the Ming dynasty, and it would last well into the 17th century.

Although the Ming dynasty was a stable government, it is considered one of the most authoritarian dynasties in Chinese history (Lee and Chan 2016). That means that the ruler has all or most of the power and doesn't take others' feelings, opinions, or advice into consideration. This doesn't sound like a very good way to run a country, does it? There were some cultural changes for the better during the Ming dynasty, though. For example, the arts returned to a more honored place in society. Traditional drama, which had begun in the Song dynasty but had been outlawed by the Mongols, was restored in the Ming dynasty.

The Ming dynasty is marked by wars and struggles with the Mongols in the north and the Juchen in the northeast; both these neighbors tried to push their way into China with some success. The Ming were able to hold their boundaries at the Great Wall and spent much effort in fortification to maintain their safety. Eventually, bickering and discord within the governmental ranks had weakened the Ming from within, making them a target for invasion.

This invasion, which happened in 1644, actually came by invitation, when Ming military commanders asked for help from a neighboring tribe to the north to help fight off a rebel leader who was trying to usurp the throne. As we have seen before in history, this sort of invitation never ends well. Their neighbors, the Manchu tribe, had been pushing hard against China's northern border and were all too happy to help! When they were done smashing the rebellion, they stayed and established their own rule. This was the beginning of the Qing dynasty period.

### **NARRATION BREAK:**

Discuss the Yuan dynasty.



This map shows the Mongol Empire after it was divided following Kublai Khan's death. Nevertheless, it still depicts how vast the empire was, as well as invasion routes used by Genghis Khan and other Mongol leaders. The country boundaries on the map are modern and do not reflect the boundaries at the time.

**ANALYZE** What do you notice about the expanse of the Mongol Empire during the time of Genghis Khan versus under later rulers? (Genghis Khan's invasions are marked with yellow arrows while the others are shown with blue arrows.)

**CONNECT** Why do you think the Mongol Empire was divided up the way it was?



We have learned that the Mongol Empire had a lasting influence on the world; now, I want to share with you how Christianity had a profound effect on this massive and influential empire. Back in the Church History section for Chapter 8, we learned about an Eastern church that history calls the Nestorian Church. This church, along with the Roman Catholic Church, was important to the culture of the mighty Mongol Empire during the 13th and 14th centuries (Shan 2011, 29). The Nestorian Church was absorbed into the Mongol Empire through military conquest as the Mongols invaded lands with longstanding Nestorian Christian populations, while the Roman Catholics were sent into the Mongol Empire as ambassadors and missionaries (Shan 2011, 29). The missionaries hoped that by converting the warlike Mongols, they could put an end to the brutal invasions threatening Christian populations throughout Asia and Europe (Shan 2011, 29).



Ultimately, the Mongol royal families became greatly influenced by this new religion, even if it did not transform their culture's emphasis on warfare and conquest. The Mongols were known for their openness to basically all religions, from Islam to Buddhism to Western Christianity to Nestorian Christianity (Shan 2011, 31). They also blended other religions with their own traditional shamanism (Shan 2011, 31), a belief system that encompassed everything in their lives and included worship of nature and ancestors. When Christianity came along, some of them mixed it into their stew of religion, but others took it seriously.

In the early 13th century, before the Catholic missionaries arrived in the Mongol Empire, Nestorian Christianity was popular and extremely influential in the royal families' lives. A number of conquered Nestorian Christian Turkic princesses married into the Mongol royal family (Shan 2011, 32). These women, who raised their children to be Christian, and a few Nestorian Christian men, serving in the high positions of the Mongol court, wielded great power in Mongol politics (Shan 2011, 32).



This painting shows Marco Polo and his brother passing a letter from the Khan to the pope, Gregory X.

There are numerous historical records from this time that show the Christian influence on Mongolian and Chinese cultures and politics. Interestingly, in most instances, these influences were due to upper-class women who influenced their families for generations (Shan 2011, 41). We have no way of knowing how pure these women's faith was, but we do know that their beliefs were passed down from generation to generation and, therefore, was preserved and spread.



# MONGOLIA

Genghis Khan remains a highly respected figure in Mongolia. This statue of him stands east of the modern capital of Ulaanbaatar (ew-lan-BAH-ter). The country is modernizing, but traditional customs and ways of life remain popular.



Naadam (NAW-dum) is a yearly festival celebrated throughout Mongolia. It celebrates the traditional nomadic lifestyle, especially the sports of wrestling, horse racing, and archery. These archers are wearing traditional clothing.

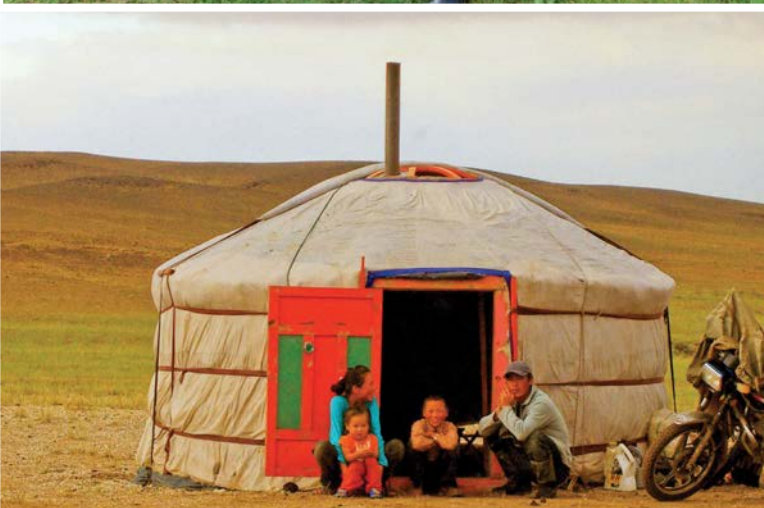




The Gobi Desert covers an expansive part of Mongolia, as well as parts of China. Bactrian (two-humped) camels are native to Mongolia.



Horses have long been important to Mongolian culture. In fact, there are more horses than people in Mongolia. Most Mongolians first learn to ride as toddlers, and horses remain the most important animal owned by the nomads in the country. Mongolians also drink horse milk and eat horse meat.



About one-third of Mongolians are still nomadic. Here is a family in front of their ger, the traditional portable home they live in. Gers are often also called yurts outside of Mongolia. Genghis Khan and his warriors lived in gers. Even Mongolians who live in cities often still prefer living in a ger.



Ger interior



# 20



## START HERE

The Ottoman conquest changed the lives of thousands of people. Among the conquered peoples were those who lived on the Balkan Peninsula. The Christians here, once under the rule of the Byzantine Christian empire, were seriously affected by the Ottomans' Islamic rule. As we work through this chapter together, I implore you to think about the following two facts: there is sacrifice that is sometimes required of us to remain faithful to Christ and also how the historical events covered in this chapter are both different from and similar to the historical time period in which we live. To be a Christian sometimes requires us to face hardships that others do not have to face. Why do we face them with confidence? Before beginning this chapter, I want to share one of my favorite Scriptures with you. I want you to think about what it says as you read this chapter:

So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls (Hebrews 6:18–19; NLT).



# VLAD TEPEŠ, IVAN THE TERRIBLE, & MORE

Let's start our chapter with a short geography lesson. In the southeast of Europe, there is the large Balkan Peninsula. This region includes modern countries like Greece, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia. In our last chapter, we studied an overview of the Ottoman Empire. We watched as they expanded their domain until they controlled a vast area. One of their conquests was the Balkan Peninsula. For many centuries, this area had been controlled by the Byzantine Empire. That's one reason why, to this day, most Christians in the Balkans are Eastern Orthodox. Over the years, as the Ottoman Turks had conquered parts of the Byzantine Empire, much of the Balkans also fell under their control. The Ottoman conquest was made easier by the division and unrest and fighting between the Balkan states.

As the Ottomans marched through the Balkans, systematically conquering state after state, most of the old aristocracies were removed from power and replaced with an Islamic government and ruler. As each state was conquered, the land was placed under the control of the sultan, the Ottoman leader. In an adaptation of Byzantine administration, the system decreed that since the sultan was their false god's (Allah) representative on earth, all land belonged to him. However, portions of it were placed under the control of military leaders to administer.

In the Balkan states of Bosnia and Albania, the Ottoman conquerors allowed many of the nobles to remain because they converted to Islam, and because of their conversion, they were allowed to keep their land. Under the Ottoman rule, there were great benefits, both financial and political, for converting to Islam. Most other nobles refused to convert and lost their land. Although the Balkan Christians were not outright persecuted into converting to Islam, they dealt with higher taxes and reduced rights.

One of these taxes levied was the devshirme (dev-SHEER-may). This "tax of sons" was imposed on Christian families in the Balkans. Though it was called a tax, it was not paid with money. Instead, it involved Ottoman soldiers taking male children from their families and sending them far away to Constantinople. There, they were converted to Islam, educated in one of the Empire's finest schools, and introduced to Turkish culture. Once they had graduated, these young men became trusted officials and officers in



16th century illustration showing the devshirme in action

the Ottoman government and military. Not all boys were taken nor were they taken every year, but it resulted in thousands of young men being taken from their families and homes by force. Though some families were pleased with the opportunities that the system gave their children and encouraged recruiters to take them, others were horrified and resisted by hiding their children or bribing officers not to take them (Morrison n.d.; Hain 2012).

During this time of Ottoman domination of the Balkans, there was an unusual historical figure. Sometimes in history, someone who was real and rather terrifying became the inspiration for a story or legend. I promise that I will not make this scary or gruesome, but I do want to tell you about a man named Vlad Tepes (teh-PESH), Vlad III. Vlad lived in the 1400s in what is now Romania. Vlad and his two brothers were the sons of Vlad II Dracul. Their father was part of the Order of the Dragon, a group of men who stood in defense of Christian Europe against the Ottoman Empire.

At the time, Vlad II was ruling the Romanian region of Wallachia. As Ottoman influence in the area grew, Vlad II pledged loyalty to the Ottoman sultan, Murad II. The sultan wanted to ensure that Vlad II would remain loyal in his new allegiance, so he took Vlad III and his younger brother Radu for collateral. Vlad III spent several years living as a hostage in Turkey. Little is known about his time there, but after his father and older brother were murdered several years later, Vlad III embarked on a lifelong campaign of revenge against the Ottomans. He was incredibly cruel in his tactics and is believed to be the inspiration for Irish novelist Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*. (The name *Dracula* means "Son of Dracul.")

A good example of how stories capture the public imagination and how people view history is Bran Castle in Romania. People call it Dracula's castle because it matches the one described in the 19th century novel. It is the model for the one in the book but is not actually Vlad Tepes' castle.



Painting of  
Vlad Tepes  
(Vlad III)



Interestingly enough, Radu, Vlad III's little brother who was also forced to live as an Ottoman hostage, remained in Turkey as an adult and seems to have embraced Ottoman culture. He was close friends with Mehmed II, the Ottoman leader who seized Constantinople. In fact, Radu was part of an Ottoman military force sent after his older brother. Vlad III was eventually killed in battle, but he had considerable military success against the Ottoman Empire during his lifetime.

The Ottoman Empire retained influence in the Balkans for centuries and remained a threat to Europe well into the 1600s, but the Ottoman Empire eventually began losing its grip and sinking into an irreversible decline. As other neighboring kingdoms like Russia and Austria grew in power and the Balkans began resisting Ottoman rule, the Ottoman Empire lost its extensive holdings in southeast Europe. We'll study more about that and its consequences in the next volume of this series.

### NARRATION BREAK:

Discuss what you learned about the Balkans.

19th century painting depicts Vlad III meeting with Ottoman officials



One of the Balkans' neighbors is Russia. We have not studied Russian history yet, but the country had been settled first by the Slavs and then by the Vikings. This new mingled people spread out over a vast area of Russia. When the Vikings had first come, it was a Viking warrior named Rurik who first settled there in the 800s, and the Slavs called him and his people the "Rus." This is how we get the word "Russian." As generations passed, the descendants of the Slavs and the Vikings grew into tribes, which scattered all over the land. Just like many of the other places we have studied, Russia was divided up into clans and tribes, which were not united under one king.

Through the years, the Rus leaders grew stronger, but they were unable to conquer many of their enemies because they were not united. By this time, the Mongols had conquered much of Russia, just as they had large portions of Asia. Mongol control of the area was relatively loose. Though they had to pay taxes and tribute, the Russians maintained their own culture (including their Russian language and Orthodox Christian religion), and most of their local nobles retained their positions.

Finally, after a couple of centuries of Mongol rule, one Russian prince was strong enough to unite the regions into one nation. Ivan was a prince of Moscow, and he was tired of how the nobles were always fighting among themselves. Ivan believed that all this division made them weaker and more susceptible to enemy invasion. He was right, too. Ivan was a descendant of the mighty Viking Rurik and was determined to be the one to shake off the control of the Mongols and unite his people. After he had formed a large-enough army to get rid of the Mongols, he set out to conquer the other regions of Russia. Ivan became known as Ivan the Great because he united Russia.

Ivan the Great's Bell Tower. This cathedral tower is within the Kremlin in Moscow.



The capital was the old town of Moscow, and Ivan had an important government center developed right in the center of the city. This government center is called the Kremlin, and it is still used today. It dates from long before Ivan's rule, but he had it enlarged and renovated. You might have seen pictures of the great onion-domed cathedral. Ivan the Great worked hard to advance education and culture in Russia. By the end of Ivan's reign, Moscow had become one of the leading centers of the Eastern Orthodox Church because Constantinople and the Hagia Sophia had fallen to the Ottomans.

Ivan's grandson, Ivan IV, was not like his grandfather. This Ivan became known as Ivan the Terrible, and he became the first tsar (ZAR, emperor) of Russia. In Russian, "Ivan the Terrible" meant "Ivan the Fearsome." Ivan was a difficult leader. He was deeply suspicious that the country's nobles were plotting against him. Even Ivan's advisers were under constant





scrutiny. Many of them lost their lives because of Ivan's paranoia. Ivan's secret police were known for being corrupt, greedy, and brutal. In their tsar's name, they evicted nobles from their homes and executed others. After his beloved wife died, Ivan the Terrible went rather insane. His hair fell out, and he became even more worried that someone was trying to take his throne. During an argument with his son, who was a grown man and heir to the throne, Ivan hit him on the head and killed him. For the rest of his life, Ivan wore black and refused to be comforted.

Following Ivan IV's death in 1584, his son Fyodor I came to the throne. Fyodor was weak, both physically and mentally; therefore, he was unable to rule effectively. His brother-in-law Boris Godunov was more than happy to take control of running Russia. Godunov, who had learned the ways of the court and government by working for Ivan the Terrible, was responsible for the major achievements during Fyodor I's reign. When Fyodor died in 1598, he did not leave an heir, thus bringing an end to the Rurik dynasty.

Boris Godunov was selected to become the new ruler. Some, however, did not think he was the rightful ruler, which led to wild rumors that Fyodor's deceased brother Dmitry was alive and should be tsar instead. When a powerful aristocratic family named the Romanovs opposed him, Boris banished them and took extensive measures to protect himself against anyone who would want to usurp his throne. These measures, coupled with his inability to help his people's suffering during a famine in the years 1601–1603, quickly lost Boris popularity and support.

Part of uniting all of Russia involved subduing independent lands. This 19th century painting depicts the fall of Novgorod, one of the wealthiest and most powerful Russian cities of the time. Ivan the Great conquered it to ensure it was not a rival to Moscow.

19th century Russian artist Alexander Litovchenko's painting of Ivan the Terrible showing his wealth to an ambassador from England



**CONNECT** In our chapter, we learned about a Russian ruler called Ivan the Terrible and his son, Fyodor I, who was a weak ruler. After the death of Fyodor I, his brother-in-law, who had been helping him rule before his death, took the throne. Boris Godunov was a better ruler than Fyodor, but it was during his reign that something very strange happened. I mentioned that there were wild rumors flying around about Fyodor's deceased brother Dmitry being alive. This is the story of the False Dmitrys and the Time of Troubles.

There are three False Dmitrys in this story, the first of which came to challenge Boris Godunov's right to the throne. Many historians have concluded that this pretender was actually a monk named Grigory who believed that he was the rightful heir to the throne. His claim to being Prince Dmitry was rewarded with a threat of banishment ("False Dmitry" 1998). He fled to Lithuania where he began gathering support from some key Lithuanian and Polish noblemen in 1603 for his campaign for the throne ("False Dmitry" 1998). In the fall of 1604, he invaded Russia but was defeated. Although his campaign ended in defeat, he gained supporters who believed that he was the rightful heir to the throne. When Boris Godunov died in the spring of 1605, his infant son was mysteriously murdered. The first False Dmitry then became the new tsar.

His success as a leader was short lived. His favoritism toward the Polish who had helped him win the throne angered his Russian followers. Even his wife, Marina Mniszek, was the daughter of a Polish nobleman. In 1606, one of the Russian noblemen, Vasily Shuysky, turned against him and led a coup against the first False Dmitry. Vasily Shuysky murdered the pretender and took his place as the tsar.

In 1607, rumors began to fly about that Dmitry had survived the coup. Another pretender appeared to claim to be the tsar. Interestingly, even though he did not look anything like the first False Dmitry, the



When Boris suddenly died in 1605, the country was thrown into chaos. Boris' son was assassinated, and Russia entered the Time of Troubles, a 15-year period marked by a series of revolts, governmental takeovers, and coups. Finally, in 1613, Michael Romanov was elected as the new tsar. He was distantly related to the Rurik dynasty (his grandfather had been Fyodor's mother's brother) and was accepted as the legitimate ruler. This was the beginning of the Romanov dynasty, which would rule Russia for more than 300 years.

### NARRATION BREAK:

Talk about what you learned about Russia.

second False Dmitry gathered a large following, including the Poles and Lithuanians who had supported the first False Dmitry (“False Dmitry” 1998). After gaining control in southern Russia, False Dmitry 2 marched on Moscow. In 1608, he established his own court and government administration in the village of Tushino.

When the wife of False Dmitry 1, Marina Mniszek, claimed that False Dmitry 2 truly was her husband back from the grave, he had as much power as Shuysky (“False Dmitry” 1998). However with the help of Swedish troops, Shuysky was able to defend his throne. False Dmitry 2 was fatally wounded in December of 1610. Finally, in March 1611, the last False Dmitry, a man historians have identified as a deacon called Sidorka, gained support of certain key people. His campaign was cut short when he was betrayed and executed in Moscow in May 1612 (“False Dmitry” 1998). Thus ends the strange tale of the three False Dmitrys. The False Dmitry stories show us how very chaotic Russia was during the Time of Troubles.



Mikhail Nesterov's *Tsarevich Dmitry*, 1899. This painting depicts the real prince.



False Dmitry I



False Dmitry II



The Balkans and Eastern Europe are important parts of the world that will play a significant role in medieval and modern history. Many Americans are not as familiar with this part of Europe as they are with the Western part. This map shows the modern boundaries, which are very different from what this area looked like during the time period we are studying. It's helpful to familiarize yourself with the countries on the map by locating places you already know to orient yourself.

## ANALYZE

Did you recognize the name of any of the countries or cities featured on the map? Why were you already familiar with them?

## CONNECT

The Ottoman Empire was situated just east of the Balkans in Europe and Asia. How do you think being that close together affected how they interacted with each other?



Christianity in Russia began when the country was still called Rus. In an area called Kievan Rus, the leader Vladimir I accepted the Orthodox Christian faith. This conversion came about as part of a pact with Byzantine Emperor Basil II. In exchange for marrying Basil's sister, Vladimir converted ("Kievan Rus" 2016). Following his conversion, his people were also required to convert (McGurkin 2014, 401). This was not the first introduction of Christianity to the area, but it helped lead to its wide acceptance.

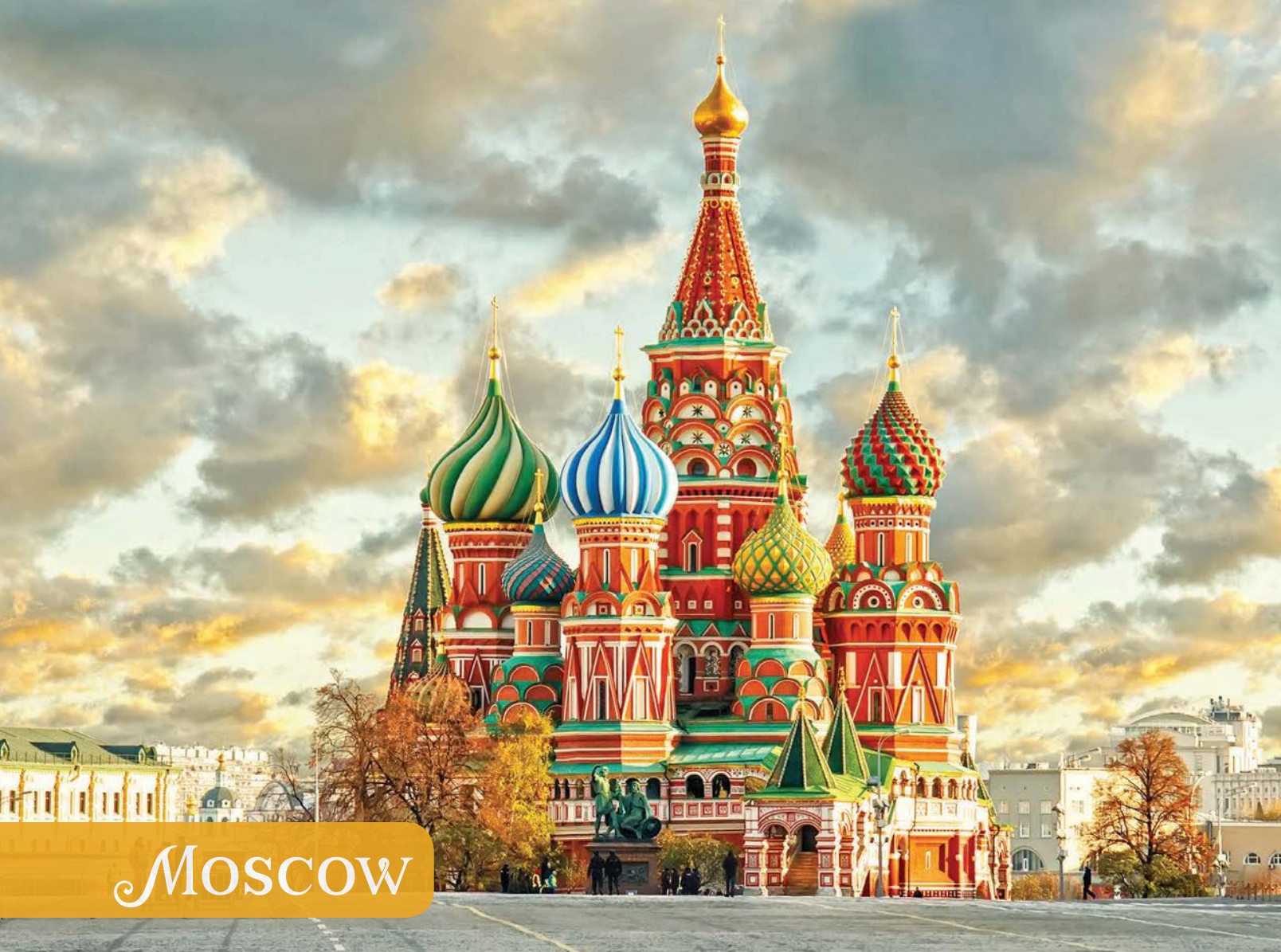
In the 9th century, even before Vladimir's conversion, the Bible was translated into Old Church Slavonic, "the first Slavic literary language," because of the work of missionaries Saints Cyril and Methodius ("Old Church Slavonic Language" 2018). (Slavic is a language family. Many Eastern European languages, like Russian, are Slavic.) The work of these two missionaries is directly responsible for the Cyrillic (suh-RIL-ik) alphabet,

which is still used in a modified form today. Although Cyril (suh-RIL) and Methodius' work in Moravia in central Europe only lasted a while, their disciples created a new script for Slavic, based on capital Greek letters ("Old Church Slavonic Language" 2018). This alphabet is called Cyrillic, named after St. Cyril, and is still used by many Eastern European languages today. The Cyrillic alphabets used in modern Russian, Bulgarian, and Serbian are modified from the original. The Russian Cyrillic alphabet has even been adapted for use by non-Slavic languages ("Cyrillic Alphabet" 2015).



Boris and Gleb. They were the sons of Vladimir I and were martyred in 1015. They have long been popular religious figures in Russian culture.





# Moscow

Moscow was the capital of Russia from the time of the tsars to the 1700s, when the government relocated to St. Petersburg. In 1918, Moscow was again made the capital. One of the most famous sites in Moscow is the stunning St. Basil's Cathedral.

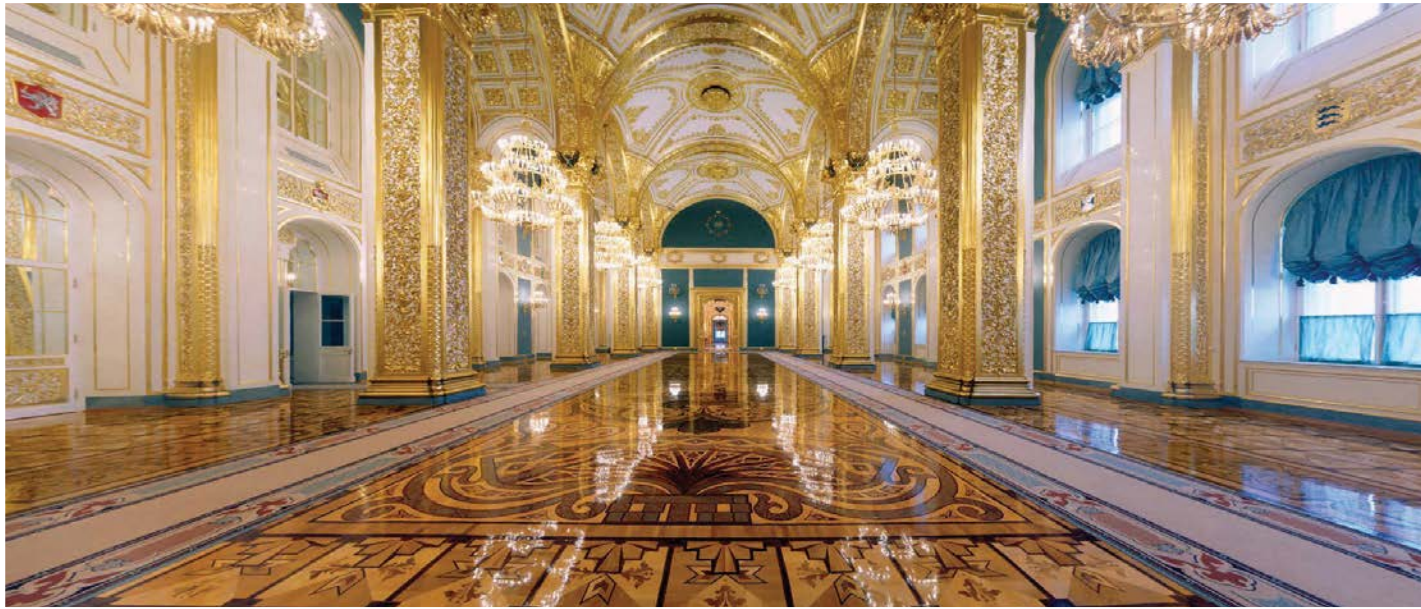


The Bolshoi Theatre is one of the most famous in all the world. It is the home of internationally acclaimed opera and ballet troupes.





The Kremlin is in Red Square. Like all of Russia, Moscow is noted for its harsh winters. The Russians are used to the bitter cold. In recent years, during the winter, Red Square has hosted a skating rink.



The Kremlin has been used by tsarist, communist, and the current Russian government as their headquarters.



Outside of Moscow is Kolomenskoye, a summer retreat used by Moscow nobles, as well as the tsars. The Church of the Ascension, the tall building in this picture, was built to celebrate the birth of Ivan the Terrible.