RELIGIOUS AND MEDIEVAL HISTORY

Unit 2
LEARNING GOALS

・ You will explain important events in the rise and development of Judaism, Christianity and Islam

・ You will identify key moments and figures in the rise of European kingdoms and feudalism

・ You will describe the significance of the crusades on European history
The Israelite (or Hebrew) nation has existed as long as the Mesopotamians but has never been a major political or military power.

The major contribution of the Israelites was their religious concepts and their religious real estate.

The Israelites founded Judaism, the first monotheistic religion.

Monotheism refers to there being only one God.

Around 1500 BC the first major Israelite general, Joshua, began conquering cities in the area of present-day Israel under belief and command from God that the land was promised to them by God.

Among the cities captured by Joshua was a small village called Jerusalem.
Israel was quite erratic for the next 500 years, somehow surviving off of a combination of leadership by priests, generals, and judges.

Around the year 1000 BC, David, the 2nd king of Israel, unified the tribes of Israel and built a strong, permanent army.

Solomon, David’s son and next king of Israel, took advantage of the peace his father won in war to build Jerusalem into an economic boomtown complete with palace, market, and temple.

Since David had spilled blood in battle, God had refused to allow him to play a part in the construction of the Israelite kingdom.

The Israelites were governed by a system of laws based on their original 10 commandments that governed relationships with God and relationships with other humans.

The kings also received messages from prophets, men and women who were believed to carry messages to and from God and were among the first in recorded history to cry out against social injustices (including releasing money and food to the poor, marital infidelity, and war-for-profit).
ASSYRIA AND BABYLON

- Around 700 BC the Assyrian empire, a long-lasting but small civilization in present-day Iraq, grew tired of constant oppression and attack by Egyptians.

- Assyrian leader Esarhaddon led a revolt against Egypt taking out nations in their path on the way—including Israel.

- While the Assyrians and Egyptians fought, Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar saw an opportunity to extend his own kingdom by kidnapping powerful Israelites and colonizing Jerusalem.

- Assyrians and Babylonians built their civilizations through fear. They killed prisoners and burned villages rather than profit from them.

- Rival nations preferring to live as slaves than die free, were more likely to surrender in exchange for their safety.

- Their kingdom lasted only until 560 BC
THE MEDES AND PERSIANS

- The Medo-Persians, in direct contrast to the Assyrians, ruled with compassion.
- Darius the Mede initially sacked the Babylonian empire and claimed their lands for Media.
- Then, in 550 BC, a Persian ally named Cyrus staged a revolt against the Mede rulers and claimed the Babylonian territory for Persia.
- Upon taking his throne as King, Cyrus began a series of political decisions that would make him one of the most admired rulers in history.
  - He allowed all vassal nations the right to independent rule as long as they paid tribute to Persia.
  - He allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem, under their rule.
  - He gave tribute and respect to foreign deities, winning respect from the citizens.
  - He is seen as the father of traditional Iranian culture and heritage.
- The Persians also created the Silk Road, a trade route between them and the Chinese civilization to the east.
Little is known of the nation of Israel for the next 400 years except
- They rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and the Temple
- They were conquered by Greece, then subsequently Rome

Around 30 AD a man named Jesus of Nazareth began to preach in Israel

He was born in Bethlehem, a small city close to Jerusalem. He was a carpenter by trade, but word began to spread that he and his cousin John were responsible for performing amazing miracles

At first local Roman authorities ignored and/or were amused by Jesus. Their opinion began to change however when in addition to preaching and performing miracles he announced that he was the Messiah
- A messiah is someone who is prophesied to lead and deliver a people from captivity.

Because of his large following, Jewish and Roman leaders feared a rebellion and had Jesus crucified as a public demonstration of what happens to insurgents
RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

- The plan backfired. Rumors began to spread that Jesus had resurrected and ascended into heaven.
- The Romans were unable to contain the rumors, and the religion of Christianity was born.
  - Christianity was the 2nd monotheistic religion, centering on the belief that Jesus of Nazareth was the “Christ” or Son of God
- The Christian religion grew rapidly thanks to the new concept of a missionary.
  - Missionaries made it their profession to convert new believers in order to spread a religion.
  - The growth was aided by the fact that the first two major missionaries were Peter (a Jew) and Paul (not only a Gentile, but a citizen of Rome).
- Romans tolerated the faith as a harmless sect at first, but within a couple of decades it had spread the length of the known world.
- Once again the Romans attempted to quash the movement through violence, including public demonstrations and executions.
- And once again the plan of violence backfired. When word spread of violence towards the “Christians” as they were being called, it only further grew the movement.
THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY

- Christianity spread easily among the Roman citizens and Roman territories because, unlike the Roman religion, it offered the same benefits of afterlife regardless of social status or wealth.
- While the wealthy and powerful were less interested, the impoverished majority of the world took the concepts to heart
  - The rich should give to the poor
  - Debts should be forgiven
  - Acts of the heart are more important than physical acts
  - Word-play concepts like “living water” and “eternal life” intrigued people as well
- By the fourth century AD, Christianity had grown beyond containment.
- It became solidified as a world religion when the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and eliminated discrimination against Christians.
THE ARABS

- The Arabian peninsula is a massive desert with almost no source of water
- The Arabs who inhabited this land couldn’t stay in one place long. They were nomads
- Arabs domesticated camels, herded sheep, and built trade routes between the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean
- In early 570 AD Muhammad was born in the town of Mecca
- After being orphaned at a young age, Muhammad apprenticed under his uncle as a merchant selling goods from town to town.
- In 610 AD, while routinely praying in a cave, Muhammad claimed he had been visited by the angel Gabriel.
- Over the next few years Gabriel would provide information to Muhammad who was to privately write them down until time to share them.
- These words would eventually be compiled into a book called the Quran.
At first Muhammad’s only supporters were his close friends and family. He began to receive local Arabian opposition, particularly in Mecca, when part of his preaching included 1) a return to monotheism and 2) ceasing the connection between religion and profit. According to Muhammad, Allah had previously tried to reveal himself through the Jewish and Christian faiths. Unfortunately, the message had been distorted. By 615 Muhammad and his followers had been forced into exile in Ethiopia. 5 years later, Muhammad would receive a vision that he called Isra and Mi’raj, in which angelic horses carried him from Mecca to Jerusalem and heaven to speak with the ancient prophets of God. It became clear to Muhammad that, despite the danger, soon he would have to return to his home city of Mecca.
Within the year Muhammad had snuck back into Mecca and began building supporters, but word of assassination plans forced him to flee to Medina.

In Medina, Muhammad built a following of those willing to listen including some of the political leaders of the city.

By 622, with the first “foreign” converts, the religion of Islam had officially begun.

Muhammad would spend the next 10 years until his death fighting a civil war in Arabia, but by 632 he had successfully united the majority of Arabian tribes under the banner of the Islam religion.

Abu Bakr, a close follower of Muhammad since his first vision, took control in 636 AD as the first Caliph.

Caliphs were officially identified prophets of Islam, and the successors of the true prophet Muhammad.

By 650 Muslim power had filled Arabia and stretched into Egypt. By 750 Muslim cultured had begun to grow as well including museums, libraries, hospitals and universities.

However, no caliph had yet managed to fulfill Muhammad’s vision of reaching Jerusalem.
ISLAM

- Muslim’s consider Muhammad the greatest prophet for returning the word of God in its original form to the world
- Don’t call Abraham, Daniel, Isaiah, Jesus, etc false prophets…it’s not their fault we twisted their words.
- All Muslims must follow the Five Pillars of Islam
- Shahada (Profession of Faith)
  - “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet”
- Salaat (Prayer)
  - Pray 5 times a day, facing Mecca
- Zakat (Giving)
  - A minimum of 25% must be given to the poor
- Sawm (Fast)
  - To celebrate the revelation of the Koran, you must fast during the month of Ramadan
- Hajj (Pilgrimage)
  - Make a journey to Mecca at least once in your lifetime
Allah is Most Great. Allah is Most Great. Allah is Most Great. Allah is Most Great. I bear witness that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah. I bear witness that there is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah. I bear witness that Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to Success. Come to Success. Allah is Most Great. Allah is Most Great. There is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5aMcuMUh1c&feature=related
By the end of the 4th century, all life in Europe somehow was connected to the Christian church.

Unfortunately, the Christian church was actually thousands of individual churches.

Fed up with confusion over basic church rituals, Emperor Constantine ordered a convention of all Christian Bishops to agree on universal rules and tenants called the “Council of Nicaea”.

- Beginning of the long process of accumulating a “Bible.”
- Definition of Jesus as man and God
- Upholding or declining of traditional rituals including castration (no) and baptism (yes)
- Defining dates of holy events including Easter and Passover

It was also during this time that the role of the Bishop of Rome as the final speaker of God on Earth began to take formation.

From this point on, the bishop of Rome became known as the Pope.
One of the most powerful kings in the history of Europe was Charlemagne of the Franks (France and Germany).

From 768 to 814, Charlemagne built a kingdom of Christian followers from Germany to western Europe.

Although never living in Rome, the Romans declared his leadership and Christian values worthy and made him Pope.

Thus, from then on, the Pope was not merely a Roman bishop but anyone with Christian and political authority.
Feudalism was the political and economic system of Medieval Europe. The Feudal system required participation from three groups of people:

1) A Lord to build or maintain a manor or castle and pay for protection from a band of knights
2) The knights to protected the land owned by the Lord, remove bandits, send scouts to receive information, and police the manor. They also held entertainment shows including jousts, gauntlets, and duels.
3) The serfs (or peasants) farmed the land, maintained the waterwheels and mills, served in the manor and at the abbey and worked in the forests

The serfs provided all necessary components for life, the knights provided protection, and the Lord provided money to pay for it all.
ENGLAND

- The first King of England was William of Normandy, in 1066
- The King, as we picture it however, began under Henry II from 1154-1189
- Henry II gave all power in the kingdom to the King
  - He wrote a common law to apply for all citizens of England
  - He presided in local court to rule over all disputes
  - He led armies of expansion into Scotland and France
- His sons Henry the Young, Richard, Geoffrey and John would all play important roles in English history as well
HENGLAND

- Henry was the natural successor to the throne, but died as a child. Richard was next.

- Richard, a soldier, led his men on the Crusades. So, although Richard was officially the King of England, someone had to be Steward over the land while he was gone.

- Geoffrey had developed too strong a friendship with King Phillip of France, and so was overlooked by Richard.

- Therefore rule in England while Richard was fighting in the crusades was given to the pathetically weak next son in the line of succession: Prince John.

- The local nobles took advantage of John’s cruelty and weakness and led a rebellion against him.

- “Robin Hood” is the story of one of these nobles.
In 1215, the rebellion against John finally succeeded. The nobles forced John to sign a pact called the Magna Carta, or “Great Charter.” Among the many new laws was the basic principle that a ruler’s power should be limited and balanced, not absolute. Other “serf-friendly” concepts included a “jury of peers” and the right to basic freedoms. The Magna Carta would become the basis for all republican and democratic nations in the future, including the United States.
At the end of the 11th century, the Seljuks of Turkey began pushing for control of Jerusalem to fulfill the vision of Muhammad.

Pope Urban II began to rally warriors to defend the city. The march of soldiers from Christian nations to retake Jerusalem was called the “Crusade.”

The first crusade went in favor of the European crusaders, but the European elite had difficulty running a war in a desert against an army of desert nomads.

In 1187, Muslim general Saladin took back Jerusalem.

Despite three more crusades, Christians never retook the city. Muslims maintained control for nearly 800 years.
The Black Death

- Large amounts of trade, huge populations, and poor living conditions in cities set up one of the worst tragedies in history: the Black Death.
- The Black Death (given its name by the black spots that appear on victim’s bodies) was a rat disease called bubonic that spread to humans through fleas.
- Victims were often abandoned to die rather than aided because of how contagious bubonic was.
- Between 1347 and 1351 an estimated 38 million out of 75 million died in Europe.
In 1073, Pope Gregory VII decreed that it was the church’s right to appoint political rulers and church officials. Although opposed by kings and nobles, the new policy eventually stuck. As the next generation grew into this new world-order, new religious professions arose. These new professions were monks, nuns, and the Saints. Females and males alike were welcomed into convents and monasteries. Some monasteries encouraged members to remain alone and in constant prayer. Others sent their members out to convert, preach, and care for constituents. Some members of these churches became so revered that they were named as Saints. Saints were people who achieved so much holiness, they were believed to have special authority in heaven. Now, salvation could come in three ways: God, the Pope, or Saints.
• Although their power was checked by the Popes, the kings and nobles never went away.

• In 1305, King Philip of France decided to declare a new, French pope.
  • If Philip could undermine the authority of the Roman Pope, maybe he could undermine the church’s authority over the people and regain some of his own power.

• Over the next 70 years, confusion over who had the right to declare Pope and where the Pope should live overwhelmed Europe.

• In 1378, the lack of a clear winner caused there two be two popes.
THE GREAT SCHISM OF 1378

- Both Popes (Rome and France) wanted the power of the church.
- Both Popes declared themselves to be supreme and the other to be the antichrist.
- All of Europe was torn between who to follow.
- A battle between popes, a continent ravaged by plague, and military nobles and kings...
- By 1417, the faith in the church had gone. Over the next 100 years, new monarchies took over in nearly every country in Europe