Post Classical World: Rise of Islam

Post Roman Western Civilization
- Power vacuum left by Romans
  - Britannia taken by Saxons, Angles, Britions, Picts, Scots
    - Germanic and Celtic People
  - North taken by Germanic tribes
    - Saxons, Angles, Jutes
  - Eastern Europe divided by different Slavic tribes
  - West divided between different tribes
    - Franks take former roman province of Gaul
    - Burgundians take western Alpine regions
    - Spain divided between Visigoths, Basques, and Sueves
  - Mediterranean island and former Carthage go to Vandals
  - SE Europe and Middle East controlled by Byzantines
    - Aka Eastern Roman Empire
    - Took on role of protectors of Christianity

Beginnings of Islam
- Pre Islamic Arabia
  - Nomadic Tribes of Bedouins
    - Desert dwellers
    - Valued family
    - Began centering around oases
  - Importance of trade
    - Unique position allowing access to Asia, Africa, and Europe
- Mecca major center for Sea-based trade
  - Major connector to Northern Africa
  - Home of Ka’ba
    - Ancient shrine
    - Contains shrines of 360 tribes
- Medina base for land based trade
  - Allowed for easy spread of goods and ideas
  - Heavily connected with Byzantium, Sassanid (Persia)
    - Also had access and later control of silk road
- Christianity had replaced the old polytheistic religions in region during the Roman occupation
  - Led to the founding of the Egyptian Coptic church and Berber Maghrib church
    - Both were African Christian churches
  - Arabs had adopted some ideas from Judaism and Christianity
    - Abraham as father of religion
    - Monotheistic
      - Allah
Birth of Islam

Muhammad
- Born in Mecca around 570 C.E.
- Raised by Grandfather and uncle
  - Born into respectable clan of Quraysh
- Worked in caravan trade
  - Traveled to Syria where he came into contact with Christians and Jews
- Married at age of 25 to Khadijah
  - Business and love based marriage
- Became aware of division between clans
  - Some very rich
    - Umayyads – Commerce based
      - Poor mostly maintained nomadic life
  - Created rivalries between clans
- Spent much time in meditation
  - Visited by angel Gabriel
    - C. 610 C.E.
    - Believed himself to be last of God’s prophets
      - Allah was true god
    - Proclaimed that there is only one god
      - All others must be abandoned
  - Revelations collected to form Qur’an
    - Islamic holy book
- Muhammad the preacher
  - Started with small following
  - Threatened by Umayyads
    - Worried Ka’ba roll might be diminished
    - Muhammad forced to flee danger
      - Accepted by Medina
  - Hijra
    - Muhammad’s flight to Medina from Mecca in 622 C.E.
      - Marks first year of Muslim calendar
- Medina
  - Muhammad helped settle Bedouin dispute in town
    - Highly respected for wisdom and knowledge = CONVERTS!
  - Growth of Muhammad threat to Umayyads
    - Worried about growing power of Medina
    - Did not want faith to be overtaken
  - Led to war between Muhammad and Umayyads
    - Muhammad proved to be skillful and courageous
  - Victory in 628 C.E for Muhammad
    - Allowed Muslims to visit Ka’ba during season of truce
  - 629 C.E. Muhammad returns to Mecca
    - Smashes shrines to old gods at Ka’ba
    - Eventually converts most of Umayyads
  - 632 C.E.
    - Muhammad dies leading to division in Muslim world
Importance of Islam
- Unified Arab tribes
  o Connected in common religion
  o Distinctly Arab in origin
  o Put Arabs spiritually on same line as Christians and Jews
- No longer divided based on tribes
  o Did not resent each other for having separate gods
- Political unity
  o Peaceful resolution to old rivalries
  o Created umma
    ▪ Community of the faithful
- Effective fighting force
  o Turned energies from fighting each other to spreading faith
    ▪ Militarily if need be

Tenants of Islam
- Islamic Law
  o Laws based on teachings of Qu’ran
    ▪ Held them accountable on earth
      • Established strict standards for interactions here on Earth
    ▪ Empowered through fact this was also God’s law
- Pillars of Islam
  o Iman - Faith or belief in the Oneness of God and the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad;
  o Salah - Establishment of the daily prayers
    ▪ 5 times a day facing Mecca
  o Zakah - Concern for and almsgiving to the needy
    ▪ Strengthened connection between community
  o Sawm - Self-purification through fasting
    ▪ During the month of Rammadan
  o Hajj - The pilgrimage to Mecca for those who are able.