

# The Infant Church: Early Christian & Byzantine Art

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ /26

## Grade 10 - Early Christian & Byzantine Questions Part 1

1. Where was Early Christian art largely produced and why? (2)

2. Whose glory and power was Early Christian art intended to illustrate? (1)

3. Make a sketch of the close up of Christ as The Good Sheppard catacomb painting from Rome, early 4<sup>th</sup> century. (1)



**The Good Sheppard. Catacomb Painting, Rome, early 4th century**



Christian religion was not legal for many years throughout the Roman Empire. As such, early **Christian art** was produced largely (and literally) underground. **Catacombs**

Early Christians dug **catacombs**, or underground passageways outside of the city to bury their dead and hold occasional religious services. In time, these catacombs grew to be massive underground networks of tunnels, which were lighted and ventilated by air shafts.

**An Early Christian Catacomb**  
Early Christian art in these catacombs differed from the art of Rome in many ways. Early Christian artists showed little interest in the grace and power of the human body, which was so important to Greek and Roman artists. **Christian Art** was intended to illustrate the glory and power of Christ.

# Architecture

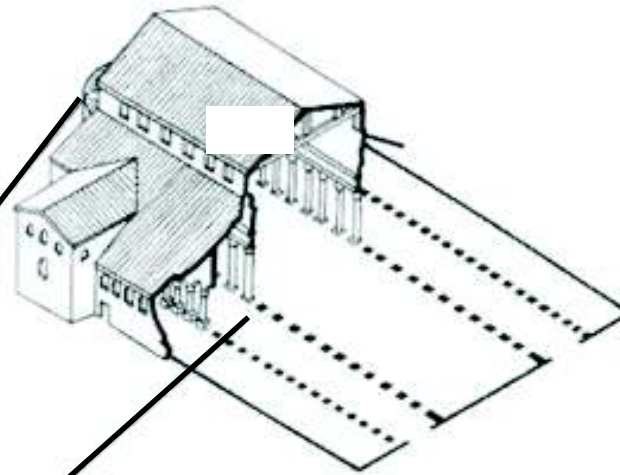


**Emperor Constantine the Great, Roman, 4th c. Marble.**

When **Constantine** proclaimed Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman empire in **AD 312**, Christians were able to bring their religion to the surface in the wake of the dying Roman Empire. They had to then decide on a kind of a building to use for their churches.

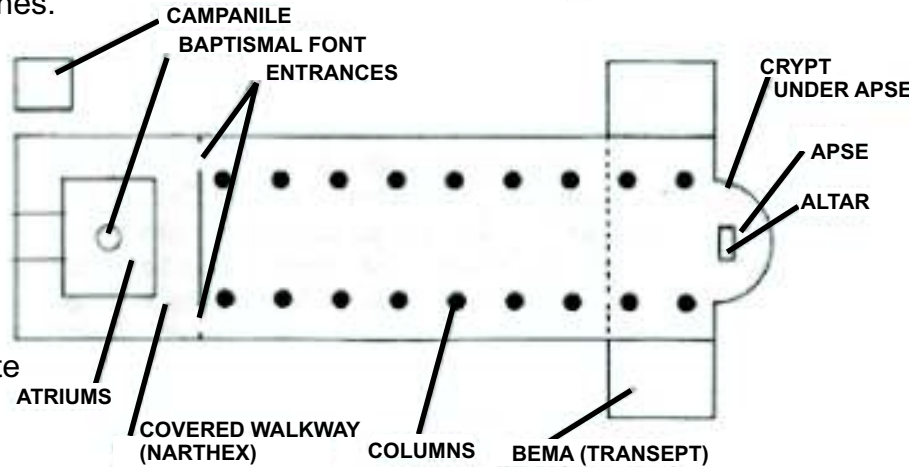
Christians again borrowed from the Romans and selected at their model the basilica, a long spacious building that the Romans had traditionally used for meeting halls.

The outside of these churches was quite plain, especially when compared to classical Roman and Greek temples.



**Apse**

**Double side aisles**



**ATRIUMS**

**COVERED WALKWAY (NARTHEX)**

**COLUMNS**

**BEMA (TRANSEPT)**

**CAMPANILE**

**BAPTISMAL FONT**

**ENTRANCES**

**CRYPT UNDER APSE**

**APSE**

**ALTAR**

4. What year did Constantine proclaim Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire? (1)

5. Make a sketch of the floor plan of the Basilica and label the transept and apse. (3)

6. Compare the exterior of the early Christian church with the Greek Parthenon, list one similarities and one differences.(4)

Similarities Differences

- |    |    |
|----|----|
| 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. |



**St. Apollinare in Classe. Exterior view, 534-549. Ravenna**



**St. Apollinare in Classe. Interior view**



**Greek Temple: The Parthenon, Athens 448-432 BC.**



**The Parthenon: East Pediment Construction**



# Roman Empire Division (Constantine time)



Before the last Roman Emperor Constantine died he created a second centre of power in Eastern Europe, which he called **Constantinople** before the Roman Empire began to fall.

This second center of power now modern day **Istanbul** (Turkey) over time began to gain strength and wealth. After constant barbarian invasions from the north eventually toppled

Rome, the city of **Constantinople** was the only center of Roman power in eastern or western Europe.

7. The Byzantine Empire was an alliance between what two institutions? (1)

8. Make a sketch of the floorplan of the San Vitale church in Italy. How is this church's floorplan a different shape from early Basilicas? List one stylistic innovation that appear in the structure. (2)

Innovation:

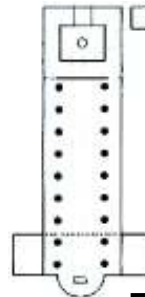
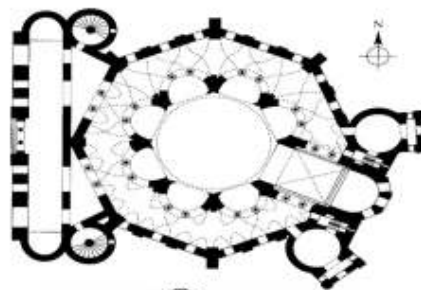
By the middle of the 4th century, **Constantinople** began the capital in this eastern location. The loss of Rome as the center of power also affected the church profoundly and as a result the center of the church and the papacy moved to eastern Europe. The alliance of state and church was later referred to as the **Byzantine Empire**.

Although the plan of many early Christian churches followed closely the established Roman basilica form there were some notable changes during the **Byzantine Empire**.

**San Vitale** in Ravenna Italy was the city's most important Justinian church and was dedicated to **St. Vitalus** who was a Roman slave and Christian martyr at the end of the 4th century.



San Vitale in Ravenna Italy c. AD 400.



Early Basilica floorplan



# Justinian and the Byzantine Style: San Vitale Mosaics

The interior is thoroughly decorated with mosaics and marble columns. The interior has a richly decorated apse and altar with large rectangular piers supporting the main arches with columns supporting the base.

These early **Byzantine mosaics** were created from reflective glass cubes. The surface of each was placed at a slightly different angle and secured at an uneven angle so when the light came through the church windows, each mosaic would glow and sparkle in what appeared to be a supernatural manner.

These **mosaics** were placed throughout the interior of the churches on ceilings, domes and walls to help create uniquely sacred spaces.



Court of Justinian, apse mosaic, S. Vitale, 547 A.D.



Court of Theodora, apse mosaic, S. Vitale, 547 A.D.

**Christ, detail of a mosaic, Hagia Sophia. 13th century.** Realistic shading is evident at the cheeks, neck, and right hand. The edges of Christ's form is indicated by a slight shading rather than a black outline around the figure.

9. How were the figures in The Court of Justinian mosaic depicted? Realistically or unrealistically and what leads to this conclusion? (2)

10. What material were these early Byzantine mosaics created from and what was their purpose in churches? (2)

11. How is the Christ (detail of a mosaic) from Hagia Sophia depicted? Realistically or unrealistically and what leads to this conclusion? (2).





Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, c. AD 400.

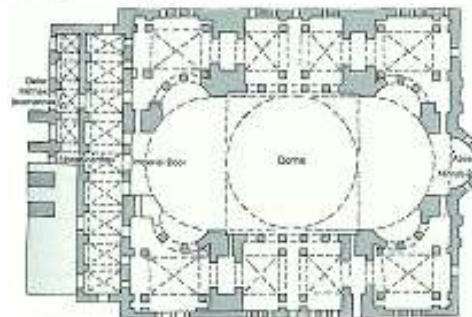
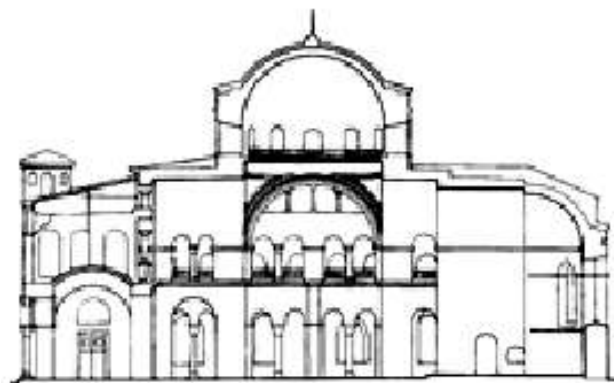
Emperor Justinian decided to build a grand church in Constantinople, which at the time was a great city and as a result he created an enormous church that he called Hagia Sophia (which meant "holy wisdom").

Hagia Sophia interior was almost three football fields in length and combined the Roman rectangular basilica floor plan with a giant central dome.

The architects who created this massive dome achieved this new architectural wonder by creating **pendentives**. Four arches were placed forming a square (as opposed to round weight-bearing walls, as in the Pantheon) supported the dome.

At the base of the dome, forty windows were placed creating the illusion that the great dome appeared to float on a halo of religious light.

Floorplans, Hagia Sophia



12. What is Hagia Sophia, and what does the name mean? (2)

13. What two architectural elements does Hagia Sophia consist of? (2)

1.

2.

14. What architectural innovation did the architects who designed Hagia Sophia incorporate to support the massive dome ceiling? (1)