



ANSWER GUIDE

Ancient: Episode 11

Constantine and Constantinople

Discussion Questions and Answers

1. How many names has the city of Istanbul had throughout history? Can you name all of them?

Three names:

- *Byzantium, to the Greeks and early Romans*
- *Constantinople, to the Holy Roman Empire*
- *Istanbul, modern-day*

2. What's the cultural delicacy Dave sinks his teeth into at the Spice Market?

Turkish delight

3. Where is Istanbul located and why was its location significant throughout history?

Istanbul is located at the southeastern corner of Europe, in the northwestern corner of what used to be Asia Minor. In ancient times, it was the gateway for the transportation of the rich goods of the East to the eager markets of the West. It was also the place to march armies from the emerging kingdoms of Europe to the ancient fortresses of Asia and the Middle East. Likewise, its command of the Marmara Sea to the south and the Bosphorus Strait to the north, which leads to the Black Sea and Russia, made it one of the most strategic coastal cities in the ancient world.

4. Describe the events that led to Roman Emperor Constantine establishing Christianity as the state religion of Rome.

Before a battle in which he was triumphant, Roman Emperor Constantine allegedly saw the sign of a cross in the sky, with the words, "In this Sign, Conquer." Because of this, Constantine not only legalized Christianity in Rome, but became a personal follower of Jesus Christ.

5. What is the Edict of Milan and why was it important to the foundation of Christianity in Western Civilization?

The Edict of Milan was Roman Emperor Constantine's formal declaration that demanded the end of all state-sponsored persecution of Christianity within the Roman Empire. This effectively lifted the once beleaguered group of Christians to a privileged status.

6. What was the Arian controversy and how did the Nicene Creed address it?

The Arian controversy was a dispute regarding the doctrine of the Trinity. The Arian group believed Jesus Christ was of a similar substance as the Father, and the anti-Arian group believed Christ was the same substance as the Father. In the year 325 AD, Emperor Constantine called the first Council of Nicea, a worldwide conference of Christian bishops, to solve the bitter disagreement regarding the nature of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. After more than two months, the Council finally issued a broad theological statement that affirmed that Christ shares the same divine substance as the Father. Over 1,600 years later, the Nicene Creed (Nicene Creed) is the most widely adopted creed throughout the Christian church.

7. Why were Christians blamed for the slow fall of the Roman Empire?

After Constantine died, the Roman Empire began a slow decline. A quick succession of weak, ineffectual emperors followed Constantine. Then, enemies encroached on the Roman Empire's border, resources and people were taxed to the limit, and in the year 410, Rome was sacked by the Visigoths. Christians were blamed as the "scapegoat" for Rome's problems, since citizens had stopped praying to mythological gods and instead turned to the one true God of the Bible. Many citizens questioned if the pagan gods were punishing the Romans for their negligence, and if Christians were thus to blame.

8. Why was the stance Saint Augustine took amidst the crumbling of the Roman Empire significant in Christian history?

Augustine rejected the popular notion that it was Christianity to blame for the Roman Empire's decline. He wrote that history itself was defined by an ancient struggle between that which is worldly and that which is heavenly. Ultimately, in Augustine's view, the City of God would triumph and the worries and fears regarding the City of Man, or the Roman Empire itself, would eventually fall away and dwindle to nothing. Amidst a time of suspicion and distrust against Christians, Augustine was a voice of truth and reason.

9. Describe the exchange of hands of the Hagia Sophia.

The Hagia Sophia was built twice, and burnt down in revolts twice, before Emperor Justinian completed the one we see today in 537 AD. It was always a Christian cathedral, ruled by Byzantine Christians for almost 1,000 years. However, in 1453, the Turks conquered Constantinople, and Sultan Mehmet converted the Hagia Sophia into his royal mosque.