Chapter Guide #8: Late Antiquity

**CONTEXT:**

During the 3rd and 4th centuries, people started to reject the idea of polytheism and turned to monotheism. The art that was produced during this time is important as a foundation for art and architecture of the Medieval Ages. Though, the man, Jesus, lived about 2000 years ago, there are no known artworks depicting Jesus until 200-250 CE when a standardized image is decided upon. The first images appeared in the catacombs.

* 313 – The Edict of Milan is put in place by Constantine to end the persecution of Christians
* Byzantium is name the capital in the East and Constantine changes the name to Constantinople
* 392 – Christianity is the official religion of the Empire
  + Christian faith is proselytizing, rapid growth of religion from humble beginnings
  + Christian faith is congregation, large assembly halls needed for worship
  + specific burial requirements (preserving body)catacombs/sarcophagi needed - mysticism and miracles are cornerstones of faith
  + The papacy is established as a political power in c. 600 by Pope Gregory
  + inconoclasts vs. iconodules
* 476 – Visigoths sack Rome, Ravenna becomes new capital
* Early Christian churches appropriate classical forms for its art and architecture
* Rise of Islam: 622 is year 1 on the Islamic calendar  Mecca becomes the religious center of Islam
  + Mohammad is their prophet

**ART WORK CARDS: 3D (Yellow) 2D (Red) Architecture (Green)**

Christ as the Good Shepherd, the story of Jonah (2D)

Sarcophagus of Junius Bassas (3D)

Old St. Peter’s, Rome (Architecture)

Santa Sabina, Rome (Architecture)

Church of Santa Constanza, Rome (Architecture)

The Parting of Abraham & Lot, Santa Maria Maggiore (2D)

Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna (Architecture)

Christ as the Good Shepherd, Mausoleum of Galla Placidia (2D)

Sant’Apollinaire Nuovo, Ravenna (Architecture)

Christ Before Pilate, Rossano Gospels (2D)

**CONCEPTS:**

1. Significance of appropriating Roman art in the development of Early Christian art and architecture.
2. The two main plans of Early Christian churches: why these forms were adopted by the early Church and the architectural terms associated with each of them.
3. Map the changes in the representation of Christ from the early Christian period to late Byzantine.
4. The function of mosaics in Early Christian art, including the choice of subject matter.
5. Know the iconography and symbols used in Early Christian art for Christ and the Apostles

Christianity starts as an underground religion, as the pagan religion of the Romans was still the majority. It was founded by Jesus Christ in the early 1st century. The early leaders and popes were martyred, such as Saint Peter. Early Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire but given restitution of property in 313 with the Edict of Milan.

Constantine is the single most advocator for the Christian faith, often favoring them in political positions and patronizing religious buildings. He was officially converted on his death bed. Christians bury their dead because it resembles the burial of Jesus Christ. Under Rome are hundreds of miles of catacombs where Christians, Jews, and pagans are buried.

**VOCABULARY:**

**ARCHITECTURE**

catacomb

atrium

narthex

nave

aisles

transept

crossing

arcade

colonnade

clerestory

clerestory

dome

squinch

buttress

central plan

basilica plan

**SCULPTURE**

iconoclast

aniconic

orthodox

baldaccino

tesserae

mandorla

piety

sacramental

Theotokos

**CONTEXT CARDS: Blue**

Late Antiquity/Early Christian

## CHRISTIAN THEMES IN ART:

**The Annunciation:** The angel Gabriel visits Mary to announce to her that she will be the mother of God. At this moment, Jesus Christ miraculously conceived, and God is made flesh and blood.  
**The Nativity:** Mary gave birth to Christ in a stable while the animals watched. In works of art, Joseph, Mary’s husband, often sits off to the side and sleeps.  
**Adoration of the Magi:** Three Magi (by tradition, kings from the East), follow a miraculous star that leads them to Christ, who has just been born in a stable. The Magi offer gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (both are aromatic tree resins), and worship the infant Christ.  
**The Temptation:** Satan visited Christ during his 40 day fast in the wilderness and tempted him to use his powers. In the third and final temptation, Satan asked Christ to worship him, which Christ refused to do.  
**The Raising of Lazarus:** This was one of the many miracles Christ performed that are recorded in the Gospels. Christ was friends with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, who were siblings. Lazarus became ill and his sisters sent to Christ for help. Lazarus died and was in the grave for four days before Christ raised him from the dead by calling him out of his tomb.  
**Entry into Jerusalem:** Christ rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, where he was greeted by crowds of people. These crowds laid down their cloaks for him and waved palm branches at him, welcoming him into Jerusalem as their leader.  
**The Last Supper:** Christ ate dinner with his apostles and encouraged them to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. He also told the apostles that one of them would betray him.

**Kiss of Judas:** Judas, who has been paid 30 pieces of silver to betray Christ’s whereabouts to the Roman authorities, leads them to him, and identifies him with a kiss (or an embrace). Christ is arrested by the Romans.  
**Christ before Pilate:** Roman soldiers take Christ to Pilate, the Roman prefect. Pilate tries Jesus, but does not find him guilty. Pilate tells the angry crowd that he will release one prisoner, but they do not choose Jesus. Pilate orders Christ to be whipped and crucified.  
**The Crucifixion:** Christ is crucified at Golgotha as his mother Mary and the apostle John watch. Jesus is offered vinegar and soon dies. He is stabbed with a lance after his death. Pilate gives Joseph of Arimathea permission to take the body of Christ off the cross. Joseph places the body in a tomb and rolls a large stone over the door. Pilate orders guards to watch the tomb.

**Descent from the Cross (also known as The Deposition):** Christ’s body is taken down from the cross by Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They bring a shroud for the body. Other figures often included in representations of this scene are the Virgin Mary, St. John the Evangelist and the three Marys (three women mentioned in the Gospels as followers of Christ, all named Mary but not including the Virgin Mary, Jesus’ mother).  
**The Marys at the Tomb:** In one tradition, the three Marys were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Mary Salome, in another, they were the three daughters of St. Anne. They went to the tomb to wash and anoint the body of Christ, but when they got there, the large stone was rolled away from the door. An angel tells the Marys that Christ is not there. Throughout the Middle Ages, this scene signalled the Resurrection of Christ.  
**The Resurrection:** Christ emerges triumphant from the tomb and carries the banner of the resurrection, a white flag with a red cross. This scene was first developed in Early Renaissance art.  
**The Ascension/Pentecost:** After forty days with his followers, Christ ascends into heaven. As he does this, the Holy Spirit descends on them, an event known as Pentecost.  
**Last Judgment:** Christ is often represented in art as judge at the end of time. These scenes often show Christ enthroned in heaven surrounded by apostles and angels, who help him judge the souls of humankind. Good Christians go to heaven, a beautiful orderly place, and the damned go to hell where they are tormented for eternity.