Justinian I  (482-565, age 83, reign, 38)

482  Born in Tauresium, present-day Macedonia to a peasant family; mother was Vigilantia, sister to his uncle Justin, who adopted him, took him to Constantinople, saw to his thorough education; served for a time in the imperial guard
518  Justin named emperor; nephew Justinian was his closest advisor
521  Justinian appointed consul; later, commander of the army of the east.
525  Married Theodora (500-548), a courtesan, 20 years his junior; the marriage made possible by Justin’s law allowing intermarriage between social classes
527  Appointed as an associate emperor (April 1), although may have been de facto ruler prior to this, due to Justin’s advancing frailty.
527  Justin died (August 1); Justinian made sole emperor; last Roman emperor to speak Latin as his first language. Last emperor to control both east and west of empire.
529  Completely revised all of Roman law, known today as Corpus juris civilis, forms the basis of Latin jurisprudence, including Canon Law, followed by the Digesta and, in 533, the Institutiones, a textbook containing the principles of law; remains influential today. These documents are basis of whole 12thC revival of Roman law in Med. Europe.
532  Concluded the “Eternal Peace”, ending the five-year war with the Sassanid Empire.
532  Nika Riots, attempt to overthrow Justinian; put down in two days, 30,000 civilians killed.
533  Two-year conquest of North Africa; General Belisarius defeated the Vandals; recovered Carthage, Sardinia, Corsica, the Balearic Islands, and Septum near Gibraltar.
535  Belisarius invaded Sicily, took Naples and captured Rome without a fight from the Ostrogoths, welcomed by Romans and Vatican.
537  Thirteen-month siege of Rome by Ostragothic king Vitigis; Rome held.
540  Ostrogothic capital Ravenna reclaimed for Rome; Vitigis and his wife captured
540  Sassanid king Khosrau broke the “Eternal Peace,” invaded Roman territory, sacking Beroea and Antioch.
542  Ostragothic gains in Italy, holding nearly the entire peninsula.
543  Justinian struck with the plague that rages in empire, Justinian survives.
544  King Khosrau defeated 30,000 Byzantine troops.
546-550 Rome changed hands three times. Worst devastation of Italy ever (540-560 twenty years of war, "Gothic Wars" Procopius writes the book about it. Italy does not recover til the Renaissance.
548  Theodora died.
552  Ostrogoth defeat at Ravenna.
552  Cartagena and other southern Spanish towns taken by the Byzantines; apogee of Byzantine expansion, Spain divided, Visigothic regime north, south coast Byzantine.
554  Large-scale Frankish invasion into Gaul and expanding.
557  Truce with the Sassanid Empire
559  Invasion of the Balkans by Slavs and Bulgars; repulsed by general Belisarius.
562  Fifty Years’ Peace ended the Sassanid wars in Iran/Iraq.
565 (Nov. 14) Justinian died age 83 without an heir, succeeded by Justin II, his nephew.