

# The Middle Ages or Medieval Period

500 - 1500

## Government of the Middle Ages

At the head of English Government stood the King. The machinery of government existed in order to put his decisions and policies into practice.

In the Middle Ages, Europe was divided into many different states. Each state had its own system of government. Some of these, like Denmark, Spain, France or England, were monarchies, and had kings to rule them.

The main problem with all of these governments was that the kings and emperors of the Middle Ages weren't very powerful. They tried to tell their subjects what to do, but a lot of the time their subjects just said "No" and didn't pay any attention. The western European governments used feudalism to help the king keep control, but often this just caused more problems.

Feudalism - a way to govern a large state when the king is poor and not very powerful and there aren't good roads so it is hard to communicate with people who live far away. The king would give land to rich men or women (fief) in return for services.

## Germanic Kingdoms Emerge

### The First Christian King

Under the rule of Clovis in 486 he began his campaign to expand his rule by wiping out the remnants of Roman control in Gaul. He had control of Northern Gaul, and now could declare himself King of the Franks.

It was during a battle with a tribe from Germany that Clovis became a Christian

“O God of Clotilde,” he cried, “help me in this my hour of need. If thou wilt give me victory now I will believe in thee.”



The dynasty or family of kings to which he belonged is known in history as the Merovingian dynasty

Clovis died in 511 he had extended Frankish rule over most of France.

Charles Martel gains power after he extends the Franks reign to the N, S, and E. He defeated the Muslim raiders from Spain at the Battle of Tours this made him a Christian hero. At his death he passed on his power to his son, Pepin the Short. Pepin wanted to be King so he fought the Lombards who had invaded Italy and threatened Rome. Pope anointed Pepin "king by the grace of God" Thus began the Carolingian Dynasty

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After the death of Pepin the kingdom is left to his two son Charles the Great and Carloman.

Charlemagne extended Frankish rule greater than any since ancient Rome. By 800 Charlemagne's empire was larger than the Byzantine Empire. He traveled to Rome to crush an unruly mob that had attacked the pope. The pope, Pope Leo III crowned him emperor.

After the death of Charlemagne his only son Louis the Pious who was an ineffective ruler his sons fought each other for control of the empire they signed the Treaty of Verdun dividing the empire into 3 kingdoms



