

## **CHARLES MARTEL Born 688 | Died 741**

Charles Martel was a Frankish statesman and military leader who, as Duke and Prince of the Franks, was ruler of Francia from 718 until his death.

Martel is considered to be the founding figure of the European Middle Ages. He was a skilled administrator and leader and built a central government for the area that he ruled. He divided his land into what would become the typical model of medieval European government: a system of fiefdoms, loyal to barons, counts, lords and dukes, which all reported to him as the ultimate leader.



Charles was also a brilliant warrior, whose tactical skills were excellent. He was able to adapt his plans in the midst of battle, and so won many victories, even when his enemies had more men and better weaponry. His skills on the battlefield allowed him to conquer nearby Bavaria, Alemannia, and Frisia. He also stopped an invading Muslim army that was advancing into Western Europe.

Historians have argued that Martel had an important role in the development of feudalism and knighthood. Charles Martel is seen to be the person who laid the ground work for a new empire. Historians have called him “The Hero of the Age.”

## PEPIN

Born 714 | Died 768

Pepin the Younger, also known as Pepin the Short, was the first of the Carolingians to become King.

Pepin was the younger son of Charles Martel. Pepin succeeded his father as ruler of the Franks in 741 and ruled together with his brother Carloman. Pepin and his brothers were successful in defeating several revolts by various tribes in the early years of their reign.

Pepin and Carloman were very loyal to the Catholic church, likely because of their religious education and upbringing. They continued their father's work in supporting Saint Boniface in reforming the Frankish church, and evangelizing [attempting to convert] tribes around them. After Carloman, who was an intensely pious [religious] man, retired to become a monk in 747, Pepin, became the sole[only] ruler of the Franks. He suppressed a revolt led by his step-brother Grifo, and succeeded in becoming the undisputed master of all Francia.

As King, Pepin began an impressive program to expand his power. He reformed the laws of the Franks and continued the religious reforms of St. Boniface.

He was able to conquer several cities, which he then gave to the Pope. In several wars, Pepin conquered various tribes and expanded his empire into the southern areas of Europe. While not known as great a general as his father, he was undefeated during his lifetime.

Pepin was the first Frankish king he made the Carolingian family the ruling dynasty of the Franks and the foremost power of Europe.



## CHARLEMAGNE

Born 742 | Died 814

Charlemagne, also known as Charles the Great or Charles I, was the King of the Franks from 768, the King of Italy from 774, and from 800 the first emperor in western Europe since the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.

He was the oldest son of Pepin the Short, and became king in 768 following the death of his father. Charlemagne continued his father's friendly policy towards the papacy [The Roman Catholic Church] and became its protector. He fought against the Lombards, a German tribe, and pushed them out of northern Italy. He also fought against Muslims in

Spain. In addition he fought wars against those in Eastern Mediterranean, and forced them to become Christians upon penalty of death.

Charlemagne is often called the "Father of Europe," because he united most of Western Europe for the first time since the Roman Empire. His rule stimulated the Carolingian Renaissance, a period of cultural and intellectual activity within the Catholic Church. In this period arts and literature flourished [grew], monastic schools to preserve a tradition of learning were built, and numerous Latin manuscripts were preserved which would have otherwise been lost.

Charlemagne also reorganized the monetary system, devising the system of pounds, shillings and pence used throughout Europe in the middle ages and in Britain until the 1970s.

Some historians believe that without the efforts of Charlemagne, civilization in Europe may have entirely vanished, and the continent would have likely have never recovered. In other words, his efforts were crucial in keeping the classical Greek and Roman culture and heritage alive, the same heritage that centuries later would give birth to the Renaissance, a revival from which virtually all of advanced civilization would grow.





