**Q#1: Why was Islam able to rise to prominence in such a short time?**

**Ans: What is Islam:** In the early seventh century, a religion that called on all to believe in one God began in Arabia (today Saudi Arabia). Islam (“submission to God”) took shape under Muhammad (c. 570–632). While many of the people living in Arabia were polytheists, Muhammad recognized the one God of the Jews and Christians.

**Beginning of Islam:** Islam began as a religion of the sedentary, but it soon found support and military strength among the nomads. Disillusioned with the people of Mecca, Muhammad looked elsewhere for converts. In particular, he expected support from Jews because he thought their monotheism prepared them for his own faith. He eagerly accepted an invitation to go to Medina, in part because of its significant Jewish population. Muhammad’s journey to Medina—called the Hijra—proved to be a crucial event for the new faith

**Growth of Islam:** Meanwhile, Muhammad sent troops to subdue Arabs north and south. In 630, he entered Mecca with ten thousand men and took over the city. As the prestige of Islam grew, clans elsewhere converted. Through a combination of force, conversion, and negotiation, Muhammad was able to unite many, though not all, Arabic-speaking tribes under his leadership by the time of his death in 632. Muhammad was responsible for social as well as religious change. In the new political community, he founded in Arabia, Muhammad reorganized traditional Arab society by cutting across clan allegiances and welcoming converts from every tribe. He forged the Muslims into a formidable military force, and his successors, the caliphs, took the Byzantine and Persian worlds by storm. They quickly conquered Byzantine territory in Syria and Egypt and invaded the Sasanid Empire, conquering the whole of Persia by 651. n little more than a century, Islamic armies conquered a vast region that included numerous different people, cultures, climates, and living conditions. Yet under the Umayyads, these disparate territories were administered by one ruler from the capital city at Damascus. The uniting force was the religion of Islam, which gathered all believers into one community, the ummah. During the last half of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth, Islamic warriors extended their sway westward to Spain and eastward to India.

**Rise of Islam:** Islam was initially spread by the sword. However, it was ultimately *a combination of both luck and theology* that enabled Islam to spread so rapidly in the way that it did. Islam is the only religion that makes a clear line between love and hate. A person who joins Islam sincerely can immediately be trusted and a person that does not is worst then a dog or a pig even if a member of a family and cannot ever be fully trusted. Also, I believe religion is so beautiful that even those who joined for the wrong reasons in the end truly loved Islam.

First, the Islamic forces came up against weakened empires. The Byzantine and Sasanid states were exhausted from fighting each other. Second, discontented Christians and Jews welcomed Muslims into both Byzantine and Persian territories. The Monophysite Christians in Syria and Egypt, for example, had suffered persecution under the Byzantines and were glad to have new, Islamic overlords. There were also internal reasons for Islam’s success. Inspired by jihad, Arab fighters were well prepared: fully armed and mounted on horseback, using camel convoys to carry supplies and provide protection, they conquered with amazing ease. To secure their victories, they built garrison cities from which their soldiers requisitioned taxes and goods.

**Summary:** Muslims were the newcomers to the Roman world, but their religion, Islam, was influenced by both Jewish and Christian monotheism, each with roots in Roman culture. Under the guidance of Muhammad, the Prophet, Islam became both a coherent theology and a way of life. Once the Muslim Arabs embarked on military conquests, they became the heirs of Rome in other ways: preserving Byzantine cities, hiring Syrian civil servants, and adopting Mediterranean artistic styles.

**Q#2: Explain the Byzantine Iconoclasm.**

**Ans: Iconoclasm:** Iconoclasm, Greek for “image-breaking,” is the deliberate destruction within a culture of the culture’s own religious icons and other symbols or monuments. Iconoclasm is generally motivated by an interpretation of the Ten Commandments that declares the making and worshipping of images, or icons, of holy figures (such as Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, and saints) to be idolatry and therefore blasphemy.

Most surviving sources concerning the Byzantine Iconoclasm were written by the victors, or the iconodules (people who worship religious images), so it is difficult to obtain an accurate account of events. However, the Byzantine Iconoclasm refers to two periods in the history of the Byzantine Empire when the use of religious images or icons was opposed by religious and imperial authorities. The “First Iconoclasm,” as it is sometimes called, lasted between about 730 CE and 787 CE, during the Isaurian Dynasty. The “Second Iconoclasm” was between 814 CE and 842 CE. The movement was triggered by changes in Orthodox worship that were themselves generated by the major social and political upheavals of the seventh century for the Byzantine Empire.

**Causes:** Traditional explanations for Byzantine Iconoclasm have sometimes focused on the importance of Islamic prohibitions against images influencing Byzantine thought. According to Arnold J. Toynbee, for example, it was the prestige of Islamic military successes in the 7th and 8th centuries that motivated Byzantine Christians to adopt the Islamic position of rejecting and destroying idolatrous images. The role of women and monks in supporting the veneration of images has also been asserted. Social and class-based arguments have been put forward, such as the assertion that iconoclasm created political and economic divisions in Byzantine society, and that it was generally supported by the eastern, poorer, non-Greek peoples of the empire who had to constantly deal with Arab raids. On the other hand, the wealthier Greeks of Constantinople, and also the peoples of the Balkan and Italian provinces, strongly opposed iconoclasm. In recent decades in Greece, iconoclasm has become a favorite topic of progressive and Marxist historians and social scientists, who consider it a form of medieval class struggle and have drawn inspiration from it. Re-evaluation of the written and material evidence relating to the period of Byzantine Iconoclasm by scholars, including John Haldon and Leslie Brubaker, has challenged many of the basic assumptions and factual assertions of the traditional account.

**The Iconoclasm- Leo III:** The seventh century had been a period of major crisis for the Byzantine Empire, and believers had begun to lean more heavily on divine support. The use of images of the holy increased in Orthodox worship, and these images increasingly came to be regarded as points of access to the divine. Leo III interpreted his many military failures as a judgment on the empire by God and decided that they were being judged for their worship of religious images.

Emperor Leo III, the founder of the Isaurian Dynasty, and the iconoclasts of the eastern church, banned religious images in about 730 CE, claiming that worshiping them was heresy; this ban continued under his successors. He accompanied the ban with widespread destruction of religious images and persecution of the people who worshipped them.

The western church remained firmly in support of the use of images throughout the period, and the whole episode widened the growing divergence between the eastern and western traditions in what was still a unified church, as well as facilitating the reduction or removal of Byzantine political control over parts of Italy.

Leo died in 741 CE, and his son and heir, Constantine V, furthered his views until the end of his own rule in 775 CE. In 754 CE, Constantine summoned the first ecumenical council concerned with religious imagery, the Council of Hieria; 340 bishops attended. On behalf of the church, the council endorsed an iconoclast position and declared image worship to be blasphemy. John of Damascus, a Syrian monk living outside Byzantine territory, became a major opponent of iconoclasm through his theological writings.

**Summary:** Byzantium directly inherited the central political institutions of Rome: its people called themselves Romans; its emperor was the Roman emperor; and its capital, Constantinople, was considered to be the new Rome. Byzantium also inherited the taxes, cities, laws, and Christian religion of Rome. The changes of the seventh and eighth centuries — contraction of territory, urban decline, disappearance of the old elite, and a ban on icons — whittled away at this Roman character. By 750, Byzantium was less Roman than it was a new, resilient political and cultural entity, a Christian state.