

The History of Damascus

The Beginning

Its first appearance in history, is as a city conquered in the 15th century BC by the Pharaoh Thutmose III. According to the Old Testament, it was once the capital of the Aramean Kingdom in the 11th Century BC. In the 10th Century BC, it started being attacked and it was in battle with several other kingdoms including the Hebrews and Assyrians. Finally, in 732 BC, it was taken over by Tiglath Pileser II ordered by the King of Judea, Achaz. Some years after the fall of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, the Kingdom of Damascus was destroyed by Babylon.

The Greeks

Damascus was conquered in 333 BC by Parmenion, one of Alexander's lieutenants, who took it from the Persians. It later fell to the Seleucids who fell into dispute with a branch of the empire of the Macedonian conqueror, the Lagides, who ruled Egypt. In 66 BC it was occupied by Pompey and belonged to the province of Syria.

St. Paul

It was on the way to Damascus, that St. Paul, who was sent to put down the Christians, had the revelation of faith. He was directed by Jesus (in the vision of light) to the house of Judas. There he met Ananias and together they preached for Christ.

Byzantium and the Persians

Under the Byzantine Empire, Damascus was an important base for watching over the Syrian Desert, But it was fatally looted by the Sassanid Persians. Damascus was later besieged by the Muslim faith fighters in 635, and was retaken by Khaled Ibn al Waleed in 636. This meant a radical change of civilization for this city as it swung from Byzantium

and Christianity to the Orient and the Semitic world.

Arab Dynasties

Damascus's most glorious time was in the first decades of Islam, when it became the capital of an empire spreading from the Atlantic coast to central Asia, the Umayyad Empire. This golden age ended with the Abbassids who moved the Capital to Baghdad. From then on, it fell under the power of various Muslim sects and sovereigns, the most important of which was the Egyptian Fatimids. It later went through another rich period, when Saladin took it from the Fatimids and started the Ayyubid Dynasty. At the time it was battling against the Franks (the Crusaders). Numerous monuments built by Nur al Din and Saladin are still the pride of Damascus.

Mamelukes and Ottomans

In 1260 it was taken over by the Mamelukes of Egypt who pushed the Mongols back. In 1516, the Ottomans from Turkey (Anatolia), took over from the Mamelukes and kept control until World War I. After World War I, a very exhausted Damascus was liberated in 1918, by an Arab contingent under the command of the British Army of General Allenby. The Syrian National Congress was formed in 1919 under the patronage of Emir Faisal who came from Hedjaz. He was named King of Syria in 1920, and one month later was taken over by the French in the name of the League of Nations.