Arab Conquest of Persia and the Introduction of Islam
Timeline of Ancient Persia

550 bce – 330 bce
Achaemenid Empire

330 bce – 171 bce
Greece Rules over Persia

171 bce – 224 ce
Parthian controlled Persia

224 ce – 642 ce
Sasanian controlled Persia

636 - 642 ce
Arabs Conquer Ancient Persia

1200 bce - 1000 bce
Zoroastrianism founded

610 ce
The prophet Muhammed founds the religion of Islam
Legend has it... that the Arabs attacked the Persian Empire (Sassanid Empire) because the Sassanid King received a letter from the Prophet Muhammad telling him about Islam and asking him to convert. The king was outraged and tore the letter to pieces, thus offending the newly Islamized Arabs and causing a war.
Reasons Arabs wanted to conquer Persia

• Resources  
  - Trade routes  
  - Taxes  

• Spread Islam  

• Power over known world  

Symbol of Islam and Allah (god)
Arab military commanders did their homework

• Persian military vastly outnumbered the Arabs
  - Confident that they are the greatest military in the world

• Arabs studied Persian history, religion, geography, trade, military weaknesses, military strengths
  - Persians were tired from fighting with the Byzantines
  - Knew where and where not to attack the Persian military
“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*
## Turning point: 636 ce – Battle of al-Qadisiyyah

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persians</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- 60,000 to 100,000 soldiers</td>
<td>- 30,000 soldiers</td>
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<td>- Fleet of war elephants</td>
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### Setting
- River separating Persian and Arab controlled land
- One bridge
Turning point: 636 ce – Battle of al-Qadisiyyah

Pre-battle talks
- Both sides sent ambassadors to try to convince the other side to surrender

Persians made the first move
- Crossed the bridge to attack the Arabs
- Got trapped in front of the river
- Majority of Persian army drowned in river as they retreated
Turning point: 636 ce – Battle of al-Qadisiyyah

Outcome

- The Arabs defeat the Persian military and Sassanid Empire
- Take over trade routes
- Spread Islam
- Built mosques
- Changed language to Arabic
- Focused on math, science, literature
Why was Islam adopted so readily?

**Fiction:**
- The Arabs violently made everyone convert

**Reality:**
- Zoroastrianism and Islam have similarities (ex) monotheistic
- Islam is more structured than Zoroastrianism
  - Zoroastrianism more of a philosophy
- People paid less taxes if they worshiped one god rather than many gods/goddesses