

# Age of Empires 2 — Byzantine Campaign

## Brief

- Design a campaign for the RTS game Age of Empires 2, focusing on the life and military campaign of [Belisarius](#), a Byzantine military commander.
- The campaign cannot exceed 4 scenarios.
- Design a fictional character to accompany Belisarius.

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# Content

- Cutscene: Historical context, loss at Thannuris
- 1. Playable scenario: [Battle of Dara](#)
- Cutscene: Belisarius is pardoned for his defeats because of his popularity, start of the Vandalic War
- 2. Playable scenario: [Battle of Tricamarum](#)
- Cutscene: Conquest of the Mediterranean, Emperor Justinian's growing jealousy and recall of Belisarius
- 3. Playable scenario: [The Nika Riots](#)
- Cutscene: Aftermath of the Riots, Constantinople in ruins
- 4. Playable scenario: [Ostrogoth revolt: recapturing Rome](#)
- Cutscene: Belisarius retiring

# Notes

- The narrative arc is centred around Belisarius, with the Nika Riots as the pivotal moment of the story:
  - Belisarius as an up-and-coming commander.
  - His shocking and decisive victories, propelling his career to great heights.
  - Continued victories and taking charge of major campaigns, seemingly nothing can stop him.
  - An abrupt end to this, not from the outside, but from Constantinople itself.
  - The tipping point, where Belisarius mass-murders civilians in the Nika riots.
  - Another attempt at old glory, recapturing Rome from the Ostrogoths, languished by a lack of support from his own Empire.
  - His retirement, having done everything the best he could, leaving on a bittersweet note as he questions his past actions as a commander and person.
- Gameplay progression matches this narrative arc per scenario:
  1. Introduction to the themes of the campaign (disadvantage of numbers, low population caps, limited resources). One basic objective to complete, with a side objective.
    - What seems to be an impossible matchup, giving the player confidence that they can always find ways around it.
  2. More complex set of objectives to complete, with player adjacency on what order to complete them in.
    - Continuing the thread above, the player always feels like they can win no matter what they do or how they do it.
  3. Break from standard AoE2 gameplay, with no villagers or base building.
    - Anxiety; something's off. Shock at the end of the scenario, with the player falling out of favour.
  4. Basic string of objectives to complete, with a disruption at the end. Narrative inversion of scenario 1.
    - A want to return to old glory, but unable to reach it. Victory only comes at the end through unexpected means. If the player were to continue on, they probably won't get lucky again.

- I'm messing with the historical order of the Nika Riots and the campaign in North Africa for a stronger narrative arc. If this were the other way round, we'd have a languishing moment in North Africa after the defining moment of the campaign, and I feel Justinian's jealousy when calling Belisarius back would be less impactful.
- The main themes of this campaign are centred around faith and where it's placed. Christian motifs/imagery should be prominent. With this said, "faith" can be applied in a more general sense, in faith in one's skill/humanity/homeland/etc. and represented through Christian imagery, and not strictly just faith in God. A minor theme is jealousy, which should always be a character's (or something's) undoing or turn for the worse.

# Characters

## Belisarius

For characterisation, I was taken by his depiction in Secret History of Procopius as being "love-blind" and wanted to run with that as a central theme. His hero unit will be strong all-around in defence and attack, with a solid amount of health.

### Personality

- Has absolute adoration for the Empire and its culture, later to a fault, as his primary motivation. Would rather look for excuses for its faults than confront them.
- Compassionate for his soldiers, seeing them as extensions of the Empire, having great respect for those willing to put their lives on the line for her.
- Easily likeable without much effort. Combined with his strong faith in the Empire, it makes him very good at rousing others.
- Great patience, until pushed to absolute extremes.

## Paulus

Paulus is a general in the Byzantine army, later serving under Belisarius after being impressed by his talent as a commander. His hero unit will have weak attack, with a good amount of defence, serving better (narratively) as a strategist and advisor.

### Personality

- Exceptionally pious, and his driving motivation. He sees the Church as the only true vehicle of the Faith, giving him a deep love of Byzantine people, but a jaded view of aristocrats and bureaucrats who are not as devoted as him.
- Very intelligent. Can read people easily.
- Manipulative, able to persuade and change the opinion of others, and uses this as his first resort. Often finds ways to convince himself (and others) he's doing this for a greater good.
- His extreme devotion to the Christian faith gives him a stringent moral compass. If people cross a self-defined line, he sees them as irredeemable.
  - In some ways his relationships to others are superficial, discarding them when he sees them as sinners, and keeping them at a distance because of it. This is notably different with Belisarius.

### Relationship/Contrast with Belisarius

Belisarius and Paulus connect over their mutual respect and love of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire, albeit in different facets. The differences in *how* they love the Empire is the central point of their falling out at the Nika Riots. They also serve as a compliment to each other's skillsets; while Belisarius is exceptional as a commander, leader, and looking at the big picture, Paulus is more adept at seeing weaknesses in the enemy, and the Byzantines themselves, and scrutinising the finer details. Paulus is also more willing to use underhanded methods to get what the Byzantines need (or, what he believes they need),

while Belisarius opts for more honest approaches. Ultimately, they both do things the other is not willing to do, which becomes the reason their relationship shatters.

## Minor Characters

### Justinian I

Scenario debut: Battle of Dara

- Emperor of the Empire.
- Primarily off-screen. Even during the Nika Riots, he is in hiding.
- It would be quite easy, especially in the Nika Riots, to paint Justinian entirely as an incompetent coward. I'd like to have a bit more complexity for him.
  - This primarily could be done through how other characters speak and comment about him.
  - Paulus' POV in cutscenes will be critical for his perception. As the main POV between battles, and someone who does not like Justinian, we'll need a lot of counterpoints from other characters at the very least in support of the Empire, and ideally with personal anecdotes to support Justinian's rule.
  - Belisarius and John the Armenian could be in vocal support initially, particularly as Justinian's taxation schemes are the reason they're able to keep the army fed and marching.

### John the Armenian

Scenario debut: Battle of Dara

- General under Belisarius
  - Wasn't present historically until the Vandalic Wars, but giving him an extra battle gives him some more screen time to connect with us.
  - Reflecting his historical position as a financial manager, he will primarily offer advice on managing and collecting resources effectively.
- A more level-headed voice than Paulus, and is able to assess things more objectively and with reason.
- Likeable and personable, popular among soldiers and Belisarius, and even Paulus likes him to an extent.
- Dies during the Battle of Tricamarum.
  - His death becomes foreshadowing for reason going out the window and things going off-rails.

### Sunicas

Scenario debut: Battle of Dara

- A Hunnic leader running away from a leadership dispute with a small group of loyal men.
- He comes upon Belisarius preparing for the Battle of Dara. He and his men pledge allegiance to him, and are subsequently baptised.
- Sunicas continues to serve Belisarius, but conspiracies against being a Hun and the death of his friend Ascan leaves him jaded. He later turns against the Byzantines during the Battle of Tricamarum.

- There are no historical records of Sunicas and his Huns after Callinicum, and this is connecting the thread of Hunnic forces being present at Tricamarum, with a Vandal plot to get them to betray the Byzantines.

## Ascan

Scenario debut: Battle of Dara

- A Hunnic commander in support of Sunicas, and is very close to him.
  - As far as I can tell, he was part of a different tribe to Sunicas, but as there are few records on him this is an easy thing to spin together.
- He follows Sunicas after his baptism, and joins Belisarius' forces.
- He is later killed in-cutsce at the battle of Callinicum.

## Gelimer

Scenario debut: Battle of Tricamarum

- King of the Vandals.
- A popular leader, liked by his men, but can be indecisive and crack under pressure.
- Now fully aware of Belisarius' skill as a commander, he is cautious in charging out with his main force, trying to divide and conquer instead.

## Tzazo

Scenario debut: Battle of Tricamarum

- Gelimer's brother.
- For lack of a better term, your standard 'barbarian' who's main joy in life is being stronger than everyone else.
- He is killed in a raid during the battle.

## Empress Theodora

Scenario debut: The Nika Riots

- Empress to Justinian.
- Decisive, strong, and intelligent. Knows what she wants, and is smart enough to get it.
- It will be, to be blunt, very difficult for me to see a woman in the 500s this high in political strata to be anything but beyond reproach.

## Hypatius

Scenario debut: The Nika Riots

- Proclaimed the new emperor by rioters in the Hippodrome.
- Reluctant to be in this role, but is scared of the rioters, and willing to discuss peaceful resolutions with Justinian.
- Can be killed by the player to help quell the riots.
  - Historically he was executed after, but I like his position as an unwilling participant looking for a peaceful solution and being swept up in someone else's rage.

## Narses

Scenario debut: The Nika Riots

- Eunuch in Justinian's court.
- Loyal to Justinian, and also deeply pious. Has friction with Paulus over this.
- Initially gets along well with Belisarius, until his deposition of the Pope, where the two fall out.
- Narses is later recalled to Constantinople during the siege of Rome, which he happily accepts.
  - This recall/falling out historically happened later, but gives us a nice gameplay moment.

## Totila

Scenario debut: Ostrogoth revolt; recapturing Rome

- Leader of the Ostrogoths.
- Chivalrous, and a skilled commander. Polite, well-spoken, and just.
- A complete reversal in ethics for Paulus and Belisarius to contend with. He is an honourable man (explicitly compared to other Byzantine commanders) who is not a Christian, with strong morals despite being against the Empire and what it stands for.
- The 'final chink in the armour' for Belisarius' faith in the Empire, marking the end to his narrative arc. Also the beginning of Paulus questioning his own faith as a Christian, left on an open-ended note.



# Scenario Details

## Battle of Dara

In-game scenario name: From Unstable Foundations

### Opening Cutscene

- Paulus introduces the new emperor Justinian and the previous battles and losses against Persia. Shot of the battle's aftermath at sunrise.
- Focus on previous loss at Thannuris and their failed attempts at building a fort. Paulus expresses his continued disappointment at the Byzantine commanders, but is uniquely smitten by Belisarius.
- Paulus has a dream seeing Belisarius razing a corrupt and Godless city, convincing himself that Belisarius is blessed by God. This city is actually Constantinople, and shots here will mirror those in the Nika Riots, but it is not obvious what city this is.
- Through rumours, social manipulation, and hear-say, Paulus helps bolster Belisarius' reputation into being designated as the main commander for the Battle of Dara.

### Objectives

1. Defeat the Sasanian Army
2. Build palisade walls along the marked areas near Belisarius' camp
3. (OPTIONAL) Recruit Sunicas by {healing his men|converting him} with a monk

### Scouts

- Belisarius has set up a camp near some rock formations. He has a modest army but is short on resources.
- The Sasanian Army will be approaching soon, and are marching from the north. Defeating them through sheer force will be near-impossible.
- Resources are scarce in the desert, but there are several small oases with trees.
- Persian locals are scattered around the desert. They will not attack your camp, but will not take kindly to Byzantine soldiers on their land.
- There are reports of a leadership dispute among the Huns to the east.

### Scenario

- Castle Age; no ageing up. No castles or stone walls. The player starts with a basic camp/TC with some villagers and a medium-sized army with two monks. The Sasanian Army does not have a camp, and their main army will come later from the north.
- After a timer runs out, the Sasanian Army will attack the player's base.
  - Minor raids, not from the north, will come before the timer runs out.
- (Objective 2) Belisarius sets out his plan to defeat the Sasanian Army. They will build ditches near their camp to halt Persian cavalry and counterattack.
  - The player must construct palisade walls across narrow entry points to their camp. These can be flagged by flags, different terrain, etc.

- The resources in the desert are limited for building defences, with little to no trees around the camp. The player must scout and find oases with trees to cut down, fighting a combination of Sasanian Army scouts and Persian locals.
- (Objective 3) After some time, a group of Huns led by Sunicas will appear on the map, asking for refuge. Paulus is initially against allowing Huns to join their forces, but says they could be baptised into the Faith. On joining, they will pay a tribute of wood.
  - Using monks to heal the Hunnic soldiers will baptise them, and bring the Huns under player control.
  - If we can bend mechanics a bit (are heroes being non-convertible a hard rule or changeable per unit?) we might literally be able to convert Sunicas with a monk, with the rest of his men following suit.
- When the timer runs out, the Sasanian Army arrives. When they destroy the palisade walls, their speed and defence are drastically reduced.
  - Not building all the ditches will not result in loss, but building all of them will make the battle significantly easier. It might be possible to win without building any ditches, if the player wants to be a masochist.
- The majority of the main Sasanian Army is defeated, and they retreat. The scenario is won.

## Closing Cutscene

- The victory at Dara is shocking for the Byzantine forces, and massively improves morale. This encourages Paulus further.
- Despite this, Belisarius is later put under inquiry for a loss at Callinicum. Paulus is enraged, and sets about once again to turn opinion in his favour. He does this through sowing discourse about the Hunnic forces present at Callinicum, claiming they were the cause of the loss.
- This plot is successful, but Paulus notes that, despite his efforts, Belisarius' popularity did most of the work.
- Belisarius and Paulus have grown closer, through their mutual deep love of Roman (Byzantine) culture, albeit in different facets, and the goal of restoring the Roman Empire.

# Battle of Tricamarum

In-game scenario name: The Empire Under the Sun

## Opening Cutscene

- After his performance in previous battles, Justinian has appointed Belisarius to the head of the campaign to conquer North Africa.
- Paulus is still smitten by Belisarius' performance, and his continued victories, and becomes even more enthralled in the divine narrative he's constructed around him.
- John the Armenian is worried about the Huns in Belisarius' forces, which Paulus dismisses.
- Belisarius has captured Carthage with ease, and prepares to end the conquest of North Africa.

## Objectives

1. Defeat Gelimer and the Vandal Army
2. Collect technologies from the locals to help defeat the Vandals
  - a. Repair all of Carthage's buildings to appease Zama
  - b. Find a relic, and garrison it in the Carpi monastery
  - c. Offer 500 gold in tribute to Curubis
  - d. Kill 30 Vandal soldiers to appease Thuburnica
  - e. Find a way to appease Assuras
  - f. Find a way to appease Neapolis
3. (OPTIONAL) Defeat Neapolis and Sunicas
  - a. Let Sunicas flee, or execute him
4. Defeat Tzazo

## Scouts

- Belisarius commands a small yet powerful army, but the Vandals have strength in numbers.
- Gelimer camps across the shallows to the west. His army is large, but he will not advance for some time.
- The Byzantines are far from home, and are not able to produce villagers.
- The Vandal Army will raid frequently, but their armies are weak.
- Carthage is safe, but will not offer much to strengthen Belisarius' army.
- Several towns are nearby Carthage, and seem willing to be bargained with. They may not be able to offer soldiers, but could help in other ways.
- Some soldiers are restless about the Hunnic forces in Belisarius' forces.

## Scenario

- Feudal Age; no ageing up. Blacksmith techs cannot be researched. Carthage is the main base for the player, almost fully repaired. There is a TC, with few villagers, but they cannot train any more. Gelimer camps on the other side of the map.

- Several small towns and camps are scattered across the map, which the player needs to convince to offer support to the Byzantine army. All are allied, and the player cannot change diplomacy.
  - Once satisfied, the towns will give the player free blacksmith tech that cannot be researched conventionally.
  - The focus on tech is to give the player a significant advantage over the Vandals, while still having relatively limited numbers.
  - This is based on Belisarius refusing to let his armies indiscriminately raid everything, which will be supported in dialogue, and African cities switching allegiance to him.
- (Objective 2) Each town will have different join conditions, objectives updated as they're discovered:
  - Zama: Punic town that will offer support after Carthage is fully repaired.
  - Carpi: the town claims they are Romans under Vandal rule, and ask for a relic to restore their ruined church.
  - Curubis: a merchant town robbed by the Vandals, and ask for gold so they can start trading again.
  - Thuburnica: Berber town who will offer support after killing a certain number of Vandals.
  - Assuras: Berber town refusing to support anyone who threatens peace in the region. They offer support after the player gains the support of three other towns.
    - If the player defeats Neapolis *before* gaining support from Assuras, they will never offer support.
  - Neapolis will never support the player, no matter what.
- The Vandal Army will occasionally send small raids to Carthage, taunting Belisarius.
- (Objective 3) After gaining support of two towns, the Huns in Belisarius' forces will switch sides to Neapolis, who become enemies. Sunicas joins them, still angry over the discord caused by Paulus, and the death of his friend Ascan. Paulus will encourage Belisarius to wipe out the town and Sunicas.
  - If the player defeats Neapolis, Sunicas will plead for mercy for him and his men.
  - If the player kills Sunicas, a technology increasing attack will be granted.
  - If the player spares Sunicas and leaves the city, Belisarius' soldiers will be impressed by his benevolence, and will all be granted a small increase of HP.
- (Objective 4) After convincing most towns to offer support, Tzazo becomes enraged, and launches an attack on Carthage.
  - If the player kills Tzazo, Gelimer will become demoralised, and his army's defence will be decreased.
- The player has the option to attack Gelimer at any time. The more towns offer aid, victory will (naturally) become easier, especially after the death of Tzazo.
  - When the player attacks Gelimer, John the Armenian will be scripted to die, with reactions from everyone else.
- With a far more advanced army, the player wipes the Vandal base and kills Gelimer. The scenario is won.

## Closing Cutscene

- Recount of victory at Tricarium. All of North Africa is conquered and under the Roman (Byzantine) Empire.
- Belisarius mourns the death of John the Armenian, but Paulus is firm that they cannot stop now.
- Belisarius' victories are celebrated widely in Constantinople.
- Paulus sidesteps unrest in Africa that begins shortly after, certain it was not the fault of Belisarius and instead the people left to govern.
- Montage of further victories throughout Italy, with a focus on the restoration of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire on Roman soil.

# The Nika Riots

In-game scenario name: Blue Blood

## Opening Cutscene

- Belisarius is victorious at Ravenna, ending the conquest of Italy. His generals and armies are jubilant at the Roman Empire being restored to its former glory. Many wonder how Belisarius will be rewarded.
- Belisarius receives a message from Constantinople, bringing an abrupt end to the celebrations. He's been recalled back to Constantinople, confused as to why, but can do little but agree to the terms.
- Paulus is certain Justinian is jealous of Belisarius' success. He becomes increasingly angry that the restoration of the Roman Empire is being swindled because of it, and begins questioning Justinian's faith.
- After Belisarius returns, there's reports of unrest in the Hippodrome, which is quickly spreading over the city.

## Objectives

1. Break through the siege before the Hagia Sophia is destroyed
2. Meet with Emperor Justinian
3. Escort Narses to the Hippodrome to meet with Hypatius
4. Execute the rioters

## Scouts

Scouts information is deliberately vague, playing into the low information theme across this scenario.

- Riots are spreading across Constantinople. Belisarius must do what he can to help.
- The Empire knows best.

## Scenario

- Dark age; no TC. The player controls Belisarius, Paulus, and a handful of soldiers, starting in the palace complex, on a cliff above Constantinople.
  - Constantinople is explored, but almost entirely under fog of war, with small gaps where we can see fires. We only want glimpses of how bad the state of the city is, with the main focus on Justinian's plans. In effect, he (and us) are blind to how bad things really are.
- The Hagia Sophia is visible, and being attacked by militia from the Greens and Blues. The player must fight through several groups of militia, navigating rubble to reach the Hagia Sophia as soon as possible.
  - A character may comment on the rioter's lack of proper military gear.
- On the player reaching the Hagia Sophia, Hypatius attempts to call off the rioters. Most leave, intent to riot elsewhere.
- (Objective 2) The player must meet with Justinian in the palace.

- (Objective 3) When reaching the palace, Theodora is present instead, and gives Belisarius their plan. The player needs to escort Narses to the Hippodrome to bargain with Hypatius, noting his reluctance to be the figurehead of the riots.
- With Narses, the player needs to navigate a maze-like palace complex to reach the Hippodrome. This maze is formed from a combination of building locations, rubble, fires, and cliff edges. They may be ambushed by Blues and Greens on the way.
  - The player can see all buildings under fog of war, but cannot see the rubble/obstacles, only discovering it when they walk close to it.
- Shortly before entering the Hippodrome, the player leads their troops through an open passage. Constantinople is no longer hidden by fog of war, and it's clear that the majority of the fires and destruction have been caused by Constantinople citizens (villagers).
  - Villagers should be running around, attacking houses, almost all buildings on fire, rubble, etc.
- (Objective 4) Seeing that her own citizens are destroying Constantinople, the city that, to Belisarius, houses and loves them, he enters a fit of rage. He interrupts the plan, and starts killing dissenters in the Hippodrome indiscriminately.
  - The majority of these need to be villagers. If they're military units, they're militia at most.
  - Hypatius may be killed by the player.
  - All objectives are wiped from this point, only showing Objective 4.
- Paulus attempts to calm Belisarius from his rage, horrified at the slaughter of innocent Christians. Realising nothing can be done, the player loses control of Paulus, and he flees from the Hippodrome and leaves the city.
- After a certain number of rioters are killed, the scenario is won. There are never enough in the Hippodrome, and the player always has to kill villagers in Constantinople proper.

## Closing Cutscene

- Paulus views a blazing Constantinople from a distance. The Hagia Sophia falls, faith fully shattered in Belisarius.
- Justinian, in spite of the mass death of civilians and destruction of the city, is content that the revolt is quashed and resumes regular rule.
- Paulus condemns himself, Justinian, and Belisarius, angry at himself for having faith in anything but God, almost seeing Belisarius as a devil figure who misled him.
- After calming down, realising the full extent of what he's done, Belisarius withdraws to himself, refuses to discuss the events with others, and laments the loss of his close friend.
- Theodora offers a chance for Belisarius to redeem himself, as Byzantine control is being lost in Italy, with a secret mission to reestablish the Faith in Rome.

# Ostrogoth revolt; recapturing Rome

In-game scenario name: The Fate of the Faithless

## Opening Cutscene

- Paulus has been stationed in Italy, growing increasingly annoyed at the people he's surrounded by and governor corruption.
- He comments on succession disputes with the Pope, and laments on corruption within the Church as well as the military and government.
- The Ostrogoths have started revolting. Paulus notes how disorganised and useless the Byzantine armies are, and has little desire to go out and fight for Justinian himself.
- Paulus is somewhat sympathetic to Totila, noting his civility and nobility in combat, but cannot fully see beyond his heathenry.
- Rumours spread that someone's been recruiting soldiers to crush the revolt. Paulus guesses it's Belisarius, and disparages him (maybe with some jealousy), still firm in his lost faith. There's a hint of doubt in this.

## Objectives

1. Recapture Rome from the Ostrogoths by reaching the cathedral
2. Get Pope Silvius to flee Rome
3. Defend Rome's cathedral against Totila's Army
4. Wait for reinforcements to arrive
5. Defeat the final wave of Totila's Army

## Scouts

- Belisarius and Narses control a modest army. Rome's walls are weak, and can be broken with few siege weapons.
- Rome should be recaptured quickly, so Belisarius can gain a base of operations. Don't raze the city, as her buildings can be used later.
- Resources are scattered outside Rome, but be wary of sending villagers outside her walls.
- Totila is a capable commander with extensive experience fighting the Empire. Take caution.
- The Empire has promised reinforcements after Belisarius recaptures Rome.

## Scenario

- Castle age; no TC. The player starts with a reasonably-sized army with siege led by Belisarius and Narses. They need to reach a flagged cathedral in Rome to recapture the city.
- On a road to Rome, Belisarius is ambushed by Totila.
  - The dialogue here confirms to us Paulus's assessments of Totila's character.
- The player breaks in through walls that are partially damaged already, and (ideally) recaptures Rome with little damage to the city. They now have a TC and can produce



villagers. Most resources are outside Rome's walls, but Ostrogoth patrols are also present there.

- (Objective 2) Belisarius gives the order to dispose of the Pope as Theodora asked, which Narses objects to, refusing to believe it was ordered by the Empire. This causes tension between the two, especially on raiding his coffers.
  - Pope Silverius will spawn at the cathedral. The player can attack him, causing him to run away and out of the city. Attacking him will cause no damage.
  - The player gets a tribute bonus after forcing Silverius out, now able to use his resources.
- (Objective 3/4) The player must hold out against waves from Totila. Reinforcements are promised with a timer.
  - These waves come with a short break between each for the player to recover/rebuild.
  - This is now a narrative inversion of the first scenario, defending against an enemy that can't be defeated by wiping their base, now on a downward instead of an upward swing.
- The timer ends, and no reinforcements come. Narses dismisses Belisarius' worries, saying they are just late, taunting him a little that he can't handle the Ostrogoths. A new timer begins.
- Several timers go by, and none of them end with reinforcements. Totila continues to send stronger waves, with the player not knowing which will be the last, and Narses and Belisarius continue to argue.
- After the second the last (unknown to the player) wave, a message comes recalling Narses back to Constantinople. He gladly accepts, taking half of the player's forces with him.
- (Objective 5) Out of sync with the timer, just as Totila's final wave approaches, Paulus arrives with reinforcements. Belisarius is stunned he came to help.
- The final wave is defeated, and Totila retreats. The scenario is won.

## Closing Cutscene

- Paulus does not forgive Belisarius for the Nika riots, but could not let someone, to him, pious enough to dispose of a corrupt Pope die stranded.
- Belisarius has become fully disillusioned with the Empire and his previous love of Constantinople, especially in contrast to Totila's chivalry as a commander.
- Belisarius and Totila meet face to face, laying out their sides respectfully. Totila promises to not raze Rome and further cities, but will not halt the conquest of Italy.
  - Historically Belisarius wrote a letter to Totila; inspiration will be taken from this.
- We leave on a bittersweet note, as Belisarius retires with regrets in putting his faith in institutions over people, Paulus questioning how a Godless man is better than the 'Godly' corrupt governors, and troubles for the Byzantines obviously not at an end.
- With Paulus' help, Belisarius builds an oratory in Rome as a sign of repentance, to the outside to the disgraced Pope, but it is left up to interpretation what it means to either of them on a personal level. End on a shot of it at sunset.

## Further Development

- An extra scenario between the Vandalic War and the Nika Riots focusing on the reconquest of Italy would be very possible. As this is after the death of John the Armenian, a lot of foreshadowing in this scenario can be done, despite it being an overall triumphant win.
- It would be possible to pull the Bulgar incursion into this as a bonus/dlc epilogue scenario, as a final last stand with both Belisarius and Paulus, fighting to keep the people safe rather than for the city, and making parallels to the last time we saw Constantinople being the Nika Riots. Even without this, ending on the final major beat of Belisarius' narrative arc will be a strong ending.