

Christianity and History: The Greeks

1. **"Classical Greece"** beginnings
 - a. Between 480 and until 323 BC
 - b. Athens and Sparta dominated the world
 - c. Rose to power through alliances, reforms, and a series of victories against the invading Persian armies.
 - d. Sparta was a closed society governed by two kings and a powerful military
 - e. Athens was an open society, governed by a Democratic government that drew its power from commercial activity.
 - i. To aid the Ionian Revolt, led by Miletus, the Athenians landed a small garrison in Ionia to fight against the Persians and to spread the revolt. The Greek forces burned the capital of Lydia, Sardis in 498 enraging the Persians, before they were finally defeated in 494 BC.
 - ii. The sacking of Sardis invoked the wrath of Darius who vowed revenge. In 490 BCE he landed his forces twenty miles north of Athens, at Marathon. While the Spartans were occupied with a religious festival, the outnumbered Athenians under the leadership of Miltiades mounted a surprise attack and routed the dumbfounded Persians at Marathon to preserve Greek independence for the time being.
 - iii. Ten years later, the Persian king Xerxes, amassed what Herodotus described as the greatest army ever put together in order to attack Greece again. The first line of defense for the Greek alliance of city-states was at the narrow passage of Thermopylae where Leonidas with 300 Spartans and 700 Thespians held back the mighty Persian army for three days before they fell.
 - iv. While the joint leadership of the Hellenes argued in typical Greek fashion if they should withdraw to the Peloponnese and where to engage the Persians next, Themistokles, seeking an advantageous quick battle, invoked the Persian fleet into attacking as the Greek ships faked an early morning escape from Salamina. As the Persians pursued what they thought was a fleeing foe, the Greek triremes turned and engaged the surprised Persians inflicting massive casualties and decimating the Persian navy.
 - v. With his navy destroyed, Xerxes feared that the Greek triremes would rush to the Hellespont to cut off his only way home, so he withdrew back to Asia leaving his able general Mardonious to fight the Greeks.
 - vi. The next year, in 479 BCE, this Persian army was defeated at Plataea by the alliance of Greek states under the leadership of the Spartan general Pausanias, putting a permanent end to further Persian ambitions to annex Greece.
 - vii. The victory of the Greek forces at Marathon and Salamis are hailed as pivotal points in the development of western civilization. The reason being that, if the Persians were victorious all the achievements of Greece (and especially Athens) that followed immediately after and what is widely consider to be the foundation of western civilization, would not have transpired.
 - viii. The competitive spirit, suspicion, and animosity toward each other that characterized all Greek cities re-emerged once the external danger of the Persians threat subsided
 - ix. Civil war lasted for from 431 until 404 BC Athens drained of resources finally capitulated to the Spartans in 404 BC

2. Cultural and Scientific Achievements
 - A. Democracy
 - B. The rational approach to exploring and explaining the world as reflected in Classical Art, Philosophy, and Literature
 - C. The teachings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle
 - D. Hippocrates became the "Father of modern medicine" the masterpieces of western culture.

I swear by Apollo, the healer, Asclepius, Hygieia, and Panacea, and I take to witness all the gods, all the goddesses, to keep according to my ability and my judgment, the following Oath and agreement: To consider dear to me, as my parents, him who taught me this art; to live in common with him and, if necessary, to share my goods with him; To look upon his children as my own brothers, to teach them this art.

I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone.

I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion.

But I will preserve the purity of my life and my arts.

I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest; I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art.

In every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing and all seduction and especially from the pleasures of love with women or with men, be they free or slaves.

All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my profession or in daily commerce with men, which ought not to be spread abroad, I will keep secret and will never reveal.

If I keep this oath faithfully, may I enjoy my life and practice my art, respected by all men and in all times; but if I swerve from it or violate it, may the reverse be my lot.

- E. The art of Classical Greece began the trend towards a more naturalistic (even in its early idealistic state) depiction of the world, thus reflecting a shift in philosophy from the abstract and supernatural to more immediate earthly concerns. Artists stopped merely "suggesting" the human form and began "describing" it with accuracy.
- F. Man became the focus, and "measure of all things" in daily life through Democratic politics, and in cultural representations.
- G. Rational thinking and Logic became the driving force behind this cultural revolution at the expense of emotion and impulse.
- H.

3. The Macedonians
 - A. Under the leadership of Philip II emerged as the only major military authority of Greece after their victory at Chaeronea against the Athenians in 338 BC.
 - B. His sight was fixed beyond the borders of Greece. His ambition was to lead a military expedition of united Greece against the Persian Empire to avenge the Persian incursions of Greece. This ambition was fulfilled by his son Alexander the Great who became king after his fathers assassination.
 - C. Alexander led the Greeks all the way to Egypt, India and Bactria (today Afghanistan).
 - D. After Alexander's death, the Empire was divided into 4 parts.
 - E. Rome had risen to a formidable power and by 200 BC occupied not only Italy, but also the entire coastal Adriatic Sea and Illyria.
 - F. During the second Punic War (218 - 201 BC) when Hannibal of Carthage managed to establish a successful campaign against the Romans in Italy, Philip V of Macedon allied with him and annexed Illyria, starting thus a series of wars with Rome that led to the eventual annexation of Greece by the Romans.
 - G. In 31 BC Octavian (later Augustus) defeated the rulers of Egypt Anthony and Cleopatra in the naval battle of Actium, and completed the demise of the Hellenistic Era.