WHI.5 Ancient Greece- Part 3

**Persian War**

The greatest challenge to the Greek world came during the war against the Persian empire.

Background:

519 B.C. Persia invades Asia Minor and takes over Ionia, a region filled with Greeks

499 B.C. The Greeks living in Ionia ask Athens for help in rebelling against the Persians. Athens sends warships.

Persia crushes the rebellion, but Persian Emperor Darius vows to get revenge against Athens.

**Battle of Marathon**

In 490 B.C., Darius sought his revenge, sending 600 ships and thousands of soldiers toward Athens, looking to burn the city to the ground.

Persia landed their army about 26 miles north of Athens, at the city of Marathon. Outnumbered, Athens sent their army to meet the Persians.

Using superior tactics, Athens was able to defeat a Persian army twice their size, and chased the Persians back to their ships.

The Greeks send a runner, Pheidippides, from the battlefield, back to the city with the good news.

**How Did They Do It?**

While the Persians had the numbers, the Greeks had the technology.

The greatest military advantage the Greeks had was a military formation called the Phalanx

**Quiet Before the Storm**

While the Persians were defeated at Marathon and headed home, they weren’t finished with Greece just yet.

Knowing that Persia wouldn’t give up that easily, Athens rebuilt its navy and formed a military alliance with fellow Greek city-state Sparta.

While Sparta and Athens weren’t close allies, they put aside their differences to unite against the common enemy, Persia.

**Battle of Thermopylae**

In 480 B.C. Persia, now under Emperor Xerxes I, returns to Greece with 200,000 soldiers and 1000 ships.

The Greek goal is to not to defeat the Persian army, but to crush their navy

The Greeks decide to try and stall the Persian army by defending the only road into southern Greece.

Led by the Spartans, a force of under 5,000 would try to hold back nearly 200,000 Persians

Using the terrain to their advantage, the Spartans and other troops were able to hold back the Persians.

For two days, the combined Greek army held strong until the Persians discovered a path to surround the Greeks.

Not wanting the entire army to be destroyed, the Spartan general Leonidas ordered the rest of the army to retreat while his 300 Spartans and 700 soldiers from other city-states would try and buy time.

On day three, the Spartans were finally overwhelmed, and all were killed.

**Aftermath**

The Battle of Thermopylae was technically a Greek defeat, even if Persia suffered more battle deaths.

The city of Athens was burned to the ground by the Persians, though few were killed because the city was already evacuated.

The Athenian navy finally met the Persian navy at the Battle of Salamis.

While the Persians had more ships, they were large and tough to maneuver compared to the small Greek ships, which rammed and sunk much of the Persian navy.

**Greek Victory**

With the defeat of the Persian navy at Salamis, the Persians are forced to return home.

The Greek victory over the Persians led to the Greeks having control over the Aegean Sea, and finding a new sense of confidence.
That confidence though, will eventually turn to overconfidence, and the working relationship between Athens and Sparta will breakdown.

**Athens' Golden Age**

After the win against the Persians, Athens became the most powerful Greek city-state.

The city of Athens was rebuilt by a city leader named Pericles

Along with the rebuild, Athens continued to innovate in the fields of literature, government and philosophy.

Athens enters its “Golden Age”

**A Cold War Emerges**

The friendship between Athens and Sparta slowly cooled.

Each side began to resent and mistrust the other.  Athens thought Sparta was cold and heartless, Sparta thought Athens was soft and spoiled.

Each side began to create alliances with other city-states to defend themselves in case the other attacked

Delian League- Athenian lead alliance of city-states (some forced to join)- around Athens, Thessaly, and areas touching the Aegean Sea, including on Thrace and Anatolia.

Peloponnesian league- Spartan lead alliance of city-states- most of Peloponnesus, around Thebes, and Macedonia.