

00:03 [music playing]

00:20 Here is how Pericles, the influential Athenian statesman

00:24 and orator who lived in the fifth century BCE,

00:28 praised the form of government the city of Athens

00:31 had instituted.

00:34 The speech is credited to him by the ancient Greek historian,

00:36 Thucydides and was delivered to his fellow citizens

00:39 in the midst of a devastating war.

00:42 Our form of government does not enter into rivalry

00:45 with the institutions of others.

00:48 We do not copy our neighbors, but are an example to them.

00:50 It is true that we are called a democracy,

00:54 for the administration is in the hands of the many and not

00:56 of the few.

00:59 But while the law secures equal justice to all alike

01:00 in their private disputes, the claim of excellence

01:03 is also recognized.

01:06 And when a citizen is in any way distinguished,

01:08 he is preferred to the public service,

01:11 not as a matter of privilege but as the reward of merit.

01:13 Neither is poverty a bar, but a man

01:17 might benefit his country whatever be

01:19 the obscurity of his condition.

01:21 There is no exclusiveness in our public life.

01:24 Welcome to this lecture on the civilization

01:28 of classical Greece and on the various experiments

01:30 the Greeks carried out in how to effectively govern

01:34 a complex state for the benefit of all its citizens.

01:37 As we have seen time and again, it

01:40 is geography and the environment that often dictate

01:42 the cultural and historical evolution of civilizations,

01:46 both ancient and modern, and this is certainly

01:49 the case with the Greeks.

01:51 But as we will see in this lecture,

01:53 the genius of the system of government

01:55 that the Greeks developed made it

01:57 both adaptable and inspirational to cultures around the world.

02:00 Greece is essentially made up of a mainland region

02:04 that juts into the Mediterranean and also of thousands

02:07 of islands.

02:10 The mainland is a mountainous peninsula, roughly

02:11 the size of the US state of Maine,

02:14 and its rugged mountain interior made internal communications

02:16 difficult. So the cities that eventually emerged  
02:20 on the mainland were isolated from each other to the extent  
02:23 that throughout the long history of ancient Greece,  
02:26 they generally preferred to remain independent.  
02:29 There was never any such thing as a Greek empire, then,  
02:32 although different states would form alliances  
02:35 in times of conflict.  
02:38 Along the west coast of the peninsula,  
02:40 the mountains fall so steeply into the sea  
02:42 that there are no safe harbors.  
02:44 But much of the rest of the mainland  
02:47 is indented with natural harbors, particularly  
02:48 the east coast and the land south of the Gulf of Corinth,  
02:51 the Peloponnesus.  
02:54 The Peloponnesus was very nearly an island  
02:56 connected to the rest of the mainland  
02:58 only by a small spit of land near Corinth.  
03:00 In fact, the word Peloponnesus means Pelops Island.  
03:03 It was named for the mythological King Pelops, who  
03:07 ruled the Greek city of Pisa.  
03:09 Today, after the digging of the Corinth Canal,  
03:12 the Peloponnesus really is an island.  
03:14 The challenges of travel in the Greek interior  
03:18 and the nature of the region's coastline  
03:20 acted as a natural encouragement to the development  
03:23 of robust maritime trade and communication by sea.  
03:26 Indeed, the Greeks were a superb maritime people.  
03:30 Another geographical feature of critical importance  
03:33 to Greek history is the serious lack  
03:36 of arable land in the country, and this  
03:38 forced the mainland city-states to establish colonies abroad,  
03:41 both to serve as supplementary sources of food  
03:44 and to provide more space for rapidly increasing populations.  
03:49 Because of its geography and the widespread unrest  
03:53 across the eastern Mediterranean during the so-called Greek Dark  
03:56 Ages, from roughly 1100 to 800 BCE,  
03:59 no central power emerged in the region during this period.  
04:03 Instead, it was left up to local institutions  
04:07 to try and restore civil society.  
04:10 In the context of this ongoing conflict,  
04:13 it's hardly surprising that the most common local institution  
04:15 to emerge towards the end of this period  
04:18 was the polis, a Greek word for a fortified citadel  
04:22 that offered a refuge for surrounding communities

04:25 when needed.

04:28 What is remarkable, however, is the new species

04:29 of political system that evolved in the poleis, the plural

04:32 for polis, over time.

04:36 Because they were defensible and strategically located,

04:38 these poleis began to attract larger and denser populations,

04:42 becoming increasingly urbanized commercial and political

04:46 centers that took control of surrounding regions.

04:49 To support the functions of government,

04:53 elites within the poleis extracted tribute

04:55 from the hinterlands in the form of a proportion

04:58 of agricultural surplus.

05:00 And much like the early Mesopotamian city-states,

05:02 this tribute was used to support urban populations.

05:05 By 800 BCE, many mainland poleis had

05:09 evolved into bustling city-states which

05:12 functioned as the principal centers of Greek civilization

05:15 throughout its history.

05:18 The next century was characterized

05:21 by political tension in the poleis

05:22 after elite noble classes gained power.

05:25 They established an aristocracy, a Greek word

05:28 that means government by the best,

05:31 or an oligarchy, government by the few.

05:33 The elites also abolished most popular assemblies

05:36 and reduced commoners to a state of virtual serfdom.

05:40 But over the century that followed,

05:43 increasing maritime trade in pottery, textiles, and wine

05:45 and the minting of the first coinage

05:49 in the world to facilitate these commercial transactions

05:51 led to the emergence of a new middle class that

05:55 began to challenge the elite monopoly on power.

05:57 At the same time, with arable land in short supply,

06:01 rising populations put increasing pressure

06:04 on resources, which is why many poleis established

06:07 overseas colonies, encouraging colonists

06:10 to resettle as a safety valve against potential political

06:13 unrest.

06:17 We know of at least 400 Greek colonies

06:19 that were established in the region between 750 and 550

06:22 on the Ionian coast of modern Turkey,

06:25 the coasts of modern Spain, France, Italy,

06:28 and Egypt, and also along the shores of the Black Sea.

06:31 Greek colonization did help temporarily

06:35 ease political tensions within the poleis  
06:37 and it had a larger effect of intensifying  
06:40 commercial and cultural exchange between the various peoples  
06:43 that lived in these regions and spreading Greek language  
06:46 and culture.  
06:49 Yet despite the establishment of these colonies,  
06:51 political unrest continued to foment  
06:54 as both commoners and middle class chafed  
06:56 at the power and political presumptions of the nobility.  
06:59 Soon after 650, political revolutions  
07:03 broke out in several of the poleis,  
07:06 leading to the appearance of a new type of ruler known  
07:08 as a tyrant, another Greek word that  
07:11 means one who usurps power.  
07:13 Many tyrants seized power with the explicit support  
07:16 of the poor and middle class, then passed laws  
07:19 to redistribute land to the poor and promote commerce  
07:22 and economic development.  
07:26 They also encouraged middle class citizens  
07:28 to take up a larger role in civic and military life,  
07:30 leading to the creation of a new heavily-armed citizen-based  
07:34 military force, the soldiers of which were known as hoplites.  
07:37 In this environment of political and military reform,  
07:41 new ideas about the best way to organize and govern a society  
07:44 were constantly swimming about.  
07:48 Perhaps nothing demonstrates the wide variety  
07:51 of these political ideas better than the restructuring  
07:54 undertaken in two of the most powerful poleis, Athens  
07:57 and Sparta.  
08:00 The early Athenian political system  
08:02 resembled that of the other poleis.  
08:05 The assembly of the people was marginalized  
08:07 and nobles were in power in the form  
08:09 of a group of nine magistrates called archons, rulers.  
08:11 The original archons appear to have had little interest  
08:16 in protecting the commoners, and as small farmers  
08:18 and the urban poor became landless,  
08:21 they fell into debt slavery.  
08:23 Pressure to relieve this situation built up  
08:26 to dangerous levels until the Athenian elites  
08:28 reluctantly agreed to reform.  
08:31 At the beginning of the sixth century,  
08:35 Athenian nobles accepted a compromise put forward  
08:37 by one of their own, an aristocrat

08:40 named Solon, who was named sole archon in 594 BCE.  
08:43 Solon immediately introduced a series of sensible reforms,  
08:47 canceling lower class debt, banning debt slavery,  
08:51 and opening up membership of the ruling  
08:55 council to men of wealth, not just noble birth.  
08:57 Not everyone in Athens was happy with Solon's reforms,  
09:01 particularly the nobility.  
09:04 Political unrest broke out again and Athens fell into anarchy  
09:06 until another tyrant, Pisistratus, seized power  
09:10 in 560.  
09:13 Pisistratus' rule proved more satisfactory to all classes  
09:15 of Athenian society.  
09:18 He was also a generous patron of the arts, which  
09:20 helped engender a serious appreciation of art and culture  
09:22 that would bear spectacular fruit in the century that  
09:26 followed.  
09:29 The sons of Pisistratus were cut from a different cloth  
09:31 to their father, however.  
09:33 Their brutal tyrannical rule was only  
09:35 ended when another tyrant, Cleisthenes, seized power.  
09:38 If Athens deserves its reputation  
09:42 as the cradle of democracy, the system of government  
09:44 that Pericles lauded in his speech, much of the credit  
09:46 is owed to Cleisthenes.  
09:50 In a series of sweeping reforms passed between 508 and 502,  
09:53 Cleisthenes reduced the political power  
09:57 of the nobility; reorganized Athenian citizens  
09:59 into 10 tribes; gave the popular assembly the right  
10:02 to pass laws; and set up a new form of government,  
10:05 a council of 500 representative leaders elected by lot.  
10:10 The Athenians called this new form  
10:13 of government democracy, a word coined  
10:15 from two separate Greek words, demos which means the people  
10:18 and kratos, which means power.  
10:22 In essence, the system of government  
10:25 put in place in Athens at the very beginning  
10:26 of the fifth century was power to the people.  
10:30 Democratic government in Athens proved  
10:34 itself capable of producing great elected leaders  
10:35 like Pericles, who insisted that it was now a citizen's duty  
10:39 to participate in political life.  
10:42 Indeed, the modern word idiot comes from the Greek word  
10:45 idiotēs, used to describe a private man who did not  
10:48 participate in politics.

10:52 But democracy also came in for harsh criticism  
10:54 from the historian Thucydides and the philosopher Aristotle,  
10:57 both of whom equated it with rule by the mob.  
11:01 It was only in the early modern era  
11:04 that British thinkers like Thomas Macaulay and John Stuart  
11:07 Mill started making strong arguments  
11:10 in the defense of democracy in the hope  
11:13 that its implementation in Britain  
11:15 would lead to a shared sense of civic consciousness  
11:17 similar to that achieved in ancient Athens.  
11:20 Meanwhile, the city-state of Sparta,  
11:24 located in the central region of the Peloponnesus,  
11:27 also developed a species of democracy,  
11:30 although it arrived at this via very different set  
11:33 of circumstances.  
11:36 Faced with a growing population in the eighth and seventh  
11:38 centuries, the Spartans decided to use their military  
11:41 to extend control over the Peloponnesus.  
11:44 They then came up with an effective though brutal plan  
11:47 of destroying the power of the neighboring Messinian  
11:50 city-state and reducing its population to slavery.  
11:53 The role of these slaves, known as the Helots,  
11:57 was to provide free agricultural labor  
12:00 and keep the Spartans supplied with food.  
12:02 But there was one big problem with this plan--  
12:05 the population of the Helots increased  
12:08 at a much faster rate than that of the Spartans  
12:10 until eventually they were outnumbered by eight to one.  
12:14 Faced with the constant threat of rebellion,  
12:18 Spartan leaders decided to focus their city's energies  
12:20 on maintaining a powerful military,  
12:23 essentially turning their polis into a militarized totalitarian  
12:26 state to insure against Helot revolution.  
12:29 In the mid seventh century, Sparta  
12:33 transitioned from monarchy to oligarchy, but at the same time  
12:35 the Spartans also created a popular assembly  
12:39 that gave all citizens the right to elect their leaders, known  
12:42 as ephors and also the right to approve or veto proposals  
12:46 coming from Sparta's council of elders.  
12:50 Most male Spartans were expected to devote themselves  
12:54 to rigorous military training.  
12:57 Boys who were sickly or who had some physical problem  
12:59 were abandoned at birth, and at the age of seven  
13:02 all males were placed under the charge of tough state

13:06 educators.  
13:09 At age 20, these men were enrolled in the army,  
13:10 leaving their homes to live in military barracks.  
13:13 These soldiers were permitted to marry at the age of 30,  
13:16 although they were only allowed to visit their wives at night.  
13:19 Those who survived the tough training  
13:23 and the constant battles these soldiers found themselves in  
13:25 for the next 40 years were allowed  
13:28 to retire from military service at the age of 60.  
13:30 Now, many Greeks admired the formidable Spartan soldiers,  
13:35 but others-- including the Athenians--  
13:38 saw the Spartans as uncultured brutes who were good  
13:40 for only one thing, fighting.  
13:43 As Athens, Sparta, and other mainland Greek poleis prospered  
13:47 in their own ways, Greek colonies and merchants  
13:51 continued to gain prominence in the Mediterranean and Black Sea  
13:53 basins from Spain in the west to Crimea in the east.  
13:57 It was this expansion of Greek interests  
14:01 that eventually brought the Greeks into conflict  
14:04 with the rapidly expanding Persian Empire.  
14:06 The protracted conflict between the Greeks and Persians,  
14:10 which lasted for nearly three decades,  
14:13 is known to history as the Persian Wars,  
14:15 thanks mostly to the superb account of the conflict written  
14:18 by the great fifth century BCE Athenian historian, Herodotus.  
14:24 The spark that ignited the conflict  
14:28 was an aggressive move by the Persian King Darius  
14:30 to incorporate the prosperous Greek colonies into the Persian  
14:33 Empire by force.  
14:36 The colonies revolted in 499 and appealed to their fellow Greeks  
14:39 for help.  
14:43 In response, Athens sent ships and burned  
14:44 the Persian city of Sardis, invoking  
14:47 a furious Persian response.  
14:49 Persian King Darius sent 20,000 troops across the Aegean  
14:52 in the year 490 BCE in an attempt  
14:55 to force the Athenians to accept a pro Persian tyrant.  
14:59 The Persian fleet landed at Marathon,  
15:03 but on a hot August day the Greeks outflanked the Persians,  
15:05 forcing them to retreat to their ships  
15:09 with a loss of some 6,400 men.  
15:11 This is the victory that, according to the ancient Roman  
15:14 source Lucien, inspired the Athenian herald Pheidippides  
15:17 to run 40 kilometers, or 24 miles,

15:21 from Marathon to Athens to announce victory  
15:24 to the Athenians only to collapse  
15:27 and die after doing so.  
15:29 And that act, of course, gave rise  
15:31 to the extended foot race known as the marathon today.  
15:35 10 years later, the new Persian King Xerxes  
15:39 launched a second campaign, dispatching possibly  
15:42 the largest force ever assembled to that point in history  
15:45 across the swift-flowing water at the Hellespont,  
15:49 the narrow strait between Asia Minor and Europe.  
15:51 To make the crossing, the Persian army constructed  
15:55 two pontoon bridges, a remarkable engineering  
15:57 achievement, marched over them, and then  
16:00 headed down the coast towards Athens  
16:03 accompanied by a formidable fleet of 350 ships.  
16:06 Now, Athens hastily assembled its own fleet of 200 warships  
16:10 while Sparta formalized a defensive alliance  
16:13 of 31 states.  
16:16 A force of 300 Spartans supported  
16:18 by several allied troops prepared  
16:21 to confront the massive Persian army at a narrow pass  
16:23 at Thermopylae, which means the hot gates.  
16:27 The Spartans chose well because the hot gates gave them  
16:31 several geographical advantages to defend against an enormously  
16:34 larger force.  
16:37 The pass was only about 45 feet wide,  
16:39 was protected on the left flank by a sheer cliff  
16:42 and on the right by the sea.  
16:45 The battle between the two forces  
16:48 also represented two quite different military strategies.  
16:50 The Persians preferred to use archers  
16:54 to fire volleys of arrows at their enemies,  
16:56 then followed this up with a cavalry charge.  
16:58 But the Greeks threw it out on their hoplite forces,  
17:00 organized into a densely packed phalanx formation  
17:03 to fight at close quarters, with each soldier carrying  
17:06 a heavy bronze shield, short sword, and a long spear.  
17:11 Although the Persian military strategy  
17:14 had allowed them to create the largest empire in world  
17:17 history, the particular geographical circumstances  
17:20 of Thermopylae were much better suited to the great formation.  
17:23 For two days, the much smaller Greek force  
17:27 held the 80,000 plus Persians at bay,  
17:29 but late in the second day, a Greek traitor



17:32 revealed to the Persians a narrow path  
17:35 that circumvented the pass.  
17:38 On the third day of the battle, the surviving Spartans  
17:40 and a small number of their allies  
17:43 fought a valiant last stand, determined  
17:45 to buy the Greek forces further south the time to prepare  
17:47 for the Persian onslaught.  
17:51 The Spartans and their allies all  
17:53 died, but have been immortalized ever since in Western culture  
17:55 for the courage of their stand against overwhelming odds.  
17:59 The Persian forces, delayed but not defeated,  
18:03 continued down the coast and sacked the polis of Athens.  
18:06 But at the ensuing Battle of Salamis,  
18:10 the ships of the outnumbered Athenian navy,  
18:12 with the assistance of some very fortuitous winds,  
18:14 managed to destroy the Persian fleet  
18:17 and the Persians were effectively  
18:19 driven out of Greece forever.  
18:21 Despite the carriage of the Spartans at Thermopylae,  
18:23 it was Athens that emerged as the de facto leader  
18:26 of the Greek world after the defeat of the Persians  
18:29 and during the ensuing golden age,  
18:32 Greek civilization went on to achieve the fullest  
18:34 development of its genius.  
18:37 Although Athens was governed by a board of 10 elected  
18:41 generals for more than 30 years, the great statesman Pericles  
18:43 wielded tremendous personal influence.  
18:47 Much like modern democratic governments, the success  
18:50 or failure of the policies of the elected governing board  
18:53 meant that they would be judged by the popular assembly  
18:56 and either re-elected or thrown out.  
18:59 While it's true that even the poorest citizen had  
19:02 a vote in Athens, we do need to qualify the reality  
19:04 of Athenian democracy.  
19:08 All citizens could vote, but there were several categories  
19:10 of residents who could not-- the large slave  
19:13 population, all resident aliens, and perhaps most  
19:16 significantly, all Athenian women.  
19:19 According to law, women were the legal property  
19:22 of their husbands and their role was clearly  
19:25 prescribed-- to bear children, to manage the household,  
19:27 and to disappear when their husbands entertained friends,  
19:30 including other lovers, male or female.  
19:33 Marriages were mostly arranged, men at the age of 30

19:37 and girls in their early teens, and families were kept small  
19:40 by the practice of infanticide, particularly  
19:44 of unwanted female babies.  
19:47 While Athenian women had almost no chance  
19:50 to participate in public life and had  
19:52 lives of seclusion, locked in their homes  
19:54 and forbidden to speak to men outside the family,  
19:56 things were very different in the rigid militarized society  
19:59 of Sparta.  
20:02 Because Spartan authorities hoped  
20:04 their woman would bear strong sons for the military,  
20:06 the state prescribed vigorous physical exercise for girls.  
20:10 Like boys, they trained naked in public  
20:13 or wore tunics that allowed for little modesty.  
20:16 By the time they became women, they were very fit  
20:19 and had completely bought into the military ethos  
20:22 of the state.  
20:25 As the men headed off to battle, Spartan women  
20:26 were heard to cry as they lined the streets, come back bearing  
20:29 your shield or being carried on it-- that is come back a winner  
20:34 or dead.  
20:37 In Sparta, women were older at marriage, around 18.  
20:39 They were permitted to own property and manage  
20:42 their own households and they had the right  
20:45 to take another husband if their first was away at war too long.  
20:48 But I don't want to exaggerate the differences  
20:52 between the lives of women in Sparta and Athens.  
20:54 Spartan women were still under the control of males  
20:58 and Athenian tombstones demonstrate  
21:00 that many married Athenians were genuinely happy and devoted  
21:03 to each other.  
21:06 I also don't want to exaggerate the virtues  
21:08 of Athenian society, impressive as its democracy was.  
21:11 Slavery was a common feature in all Greek poleis,  
21:15 including Athens.  
21:18 As many as 20% of the residents of Athens  
21:20 were slaves who had been brought to the city by slave dealers  
21:23 to work as agricultural or manufacturing laborers.  
21:26 Most Athenians seemed to have agreed with the philosopher  
21:30 Aristotle, who argued that non-Greeks were incapable  
21:33 of human reason and needed the guidance of a Greek master.  
21:37 As Aristotle put it, slavery was part of the natural order  
21:41 of societies.  
21:45 For that some should rule and others be ruled

21:46 is a thing not only necessary, but expedient.  
21:49 From the hour of their birth, some  
21:53 are marked out for subjection, others for rule.  
21:57 Ultimately, the triumphs and failures  
22:00 of classical Greek society ended in bitter self-destruction  
22:03 through civil war.  
22:06 Although the Persians had been driven out of mainland Greece,  
22:08 they still ruled many Greek colonies  
22:11 along the Ionian coast.  
22:13 The Athenians addressed the situation  
22:15 by establishing a defensive alliance of several  
22:17 of the Aegean city-states, the Delian League, in 478 BCE.  
22:21 Sparta, for its part, returned to its preferred policy  
22:26 of isolationism.  
22:29 From the beginning, Athens dominated the Delian League,  
22:32 insisting that the allied states pay large amounts of cash  
22:35 to Athens so that she could maintain her navy  
22:38 and thus protect members of the League  
22:41 in case of renewed conflict with the Persians.  
22:43 But what many allies resented as the years went  
22:46 by with no further outbreak of hostilities with the Persians  
22:49 was that the coins they were applying to Athens  
22:53 were really being used to finance Athenian building  
22:55 projects.  
22:58 Even after 468, when the Ionian colonies were  
23:00 freed from the Persian yoke and the Persian fleet destroyed,  
23:03 the Athenians refused to disband the Delian League,  
23:06 transforming it into a quasi empire with Athens  
23:10 as the leader.  
23:13 Resentment grew stronger during the 32-year reign of Pericles,  
23:16 when Delian League contributions were used--  
23:20 some would say stolen-- to partly finance the massive  
23:22 and very expensive construction projects that characterized  
23:25 this golden Athenian age and would so astonish visitors  
23:29 to Athens even today, projects such as the Acropolis.  
23:34 Pericles justified Athenian imperialism  
23:38 by arguing that having a strong Athens meant that all of Greece  
23:40 was free from fear of outside invasion.  
23:44 And he justified his building projects  
23:47 by arguing that construction of the Acropolis  
23:49 would result in a building whose magnificent  
23:52 and breathtaking architectural brilliance  
23:54 would forever glorify the prestige  
23:57 of the city and its allies.

23:59 As Pericles put it, all kinds of enterprises  
24:01 should be created which will provide  
24:05 an inspiration for every art.  
24:06 We must devote ourselves to acquiring  
24:09 things that will be the source of everlasting fame.  
24:12 The construction of the centerpiece of the project,  
24:16 the temple known as the Parthenon,  
24:19 was personally supervised by Pericles  
24:20 and he spared no expense.  
24:23 Records indicate an enormous cost of 5,000 talents-- that  
24:25 is close to \$7 billion US today-- just in the first year,  
24:29 and the building took 15 years to complete.  
24:33 Now, those of us who have seen the Parthenon  
24:37 would readily agree that Pericles succeeded  
24:39 in creating magnificent architecture that has, indeed,  
24:41 been a source of everlasting fame for Athenian brilliance  
24:44 ever since.  
24:48 But other Greek city-states that were not in the Delian League  
24:49 were unimpressed and began to ally themselves with Sparta  
24:52 in a new power block they came to be known as the Spartan  
24:56 League.  
24:59 They argued that Athens was acting like a tyrant city.  
25:01 In 431 BCE, tension between Sparta and Athens  
25:05 reached boiling point and Sparta declared war on Athens.  
25:09 The war would drag on for 27 years  
25:12 and was superbly cataloged by Thucydides  
25:15 in his account of the conflict, The Peloponnesian War.  
25:18 Thucydides was a wealthy Athenian  
25:22 who was appointed as a general in the early stage of the war.  
25:24 But because he was blamed for a disastrous loss of territory  
25:27 to the Spartans in 423, he was sent into exile.  
25:31 As an exile from Athens, he was now  
25:35 able to move freely amongst the Peloponnesian allied states,  
25:36 giving him the unique opportunity  
25:40 to view the conflict from the point of view  
25:42 of both principal protagonists.  
25:44 Because of this, his work has been viewed ever  
25:46 since as relatively objective and politically realistic,  
25:48 particularly because he ascribed the events in the war  
25:52 to human decisions without resorting to interventions  
25:55 by the gods to explain them.  
25:58 During the first phase of the war, Thucydides, reports,  
26:02 the Spartan strategy was to send troops  
26:05 to invade the plains of Attica in the north

26:07 while the Athenians used their navy  
26:09 to raid the coastal allies of Sparta in the Peloponnesus.  
26:11 In only the second year of the war,  
26:15 a deadly plague broke out in Athens which  
26:17 killed 1/3 of the population.  
26:19 Soon after Pericles delivered the speech  
26:22 with which I began this lecture, he succumbed to the plague  
26:24 as well.  
26:27 The devastation of the plague had military implications.  
26:29 Athenian manpower was drastically reduced,  
26:31 although some Spartan soldiers refused to fight in case  
26:34 they came into contact with disease-carrying enemy troops.  
26:38 The indecisive conflict dragged on for more years,  
26:42 until the treaty was signed in 421,  
26:45 which included a 50-year pact of nonaggression  
26:48 and concluded the first phase of the war.  
26:51 In the end, the treaty held for six years,  
26:54 but war parties in both Athens and Sparta  
26:56 kept resentment on the boil, particularly  
26:59 a hotheaded kinsmen of Pericles named Alcibiades.  
27:02 Alcibiades tried to force the neutral island of Mylos  
27:06 to join the Athenian Empire.  
27:09 When the Mylosians refused, he executed all the men  
27:11 and sold the women and children into slavery,  
27:15 outraging the Greek world.  
27:17 War resumed in 415, when the Athenians received word  
27:21 that one of their allied colonies in Sicily  
27:24 was under attack from the city-state of Syracuse,  
27:26 a Spartan ally.  
27:29 The Athenians felt obliged to assist their ally  
27:31 and sent Alcibiades and their forces  
27:34 on what turned out to be an utterly disastrous expedition  
27:36 against Syracuse.  
27:39 Alcibiades soon defected to the Spartan side,  
27:42 leaving a general named Nicias to lead  
27:44 an Athenian force of 100 ships, about 5,000 troops,  
27:47 and a small cavalry unit.  
27:51 Procrastination by Nicias meant that virtually nothing  
27:53 was accomplished during the expedition's first season.  
27:56 And when reinforcements arrived the following spring,  
27:59 poor decisions made by the Athenian leaders resulted  
28:02 in the utter defeat of the Athenians  
28:05 in a great sea battle in Syracuse Harbor.  
28:08 The Athenian troops marched inland,

28:11 where they were ruthlessly hunted down and destroyed  
28:13 by the Syracusan cavalry, events described by Thucydides  
28:16 in painful, gut-wrenching detail.  
28:20 The Athenians managed to recover from this disaster  
28:24 and political revolution in the city  
28:27 saw a group of 400 oligarchs placed  
28:29 in power, under whose leadership Athens won several victories  
28:31 and recovered much of its territory.  
28:35 But the Spartans ended up winning  
28:38 the final, decisive conflict of the war, when  
28:39 in 405 their brilliant commander Lysander annihilated  
28:42 the Athenian fleet in a great sea battle,  
28:46 sinking 168 Athenian ships and capturing thousands of sailors.  
28:50 Athens was utterly defeated and surrendered the next year.  
28:56 The golden age of Greece was over.  
28:59 In Sparta, a reactionary oligarchy was put in place  
29:02 and in Athens democracy was suspended and replaced  
29:06 by the rule of 30 tyrants.  
29:09 Intellectuals had lost faith in democracy  
29:12 and some of them hoped for the intervention of new leaders  
29:15 who would reunify Greek civilization.  
29:18 They found them not in Athens, but to the north, in Macedonia.