

EVENTS LEADING TO THE PERSIAN WAR

The Persians built the largest empire and largest army to that point in world history. Their empire stretched east from near the Indus River the Mediterranean Sea in the west. The ultimate goal of the Persians was to continue spreading their empire across the Aegean Sea to Greece.

559-530 BC

Cyrus the Great, of Persia, unites warrior nobles of Iran

547 BC

Conquers Lydia (Asia Minor)

Herodotus Histories, 1.53, p. 21. King Croesus of Lydia consults the oracle of Delphi when contemplating an attack on the Persians. The oracle responded that Croesus' attack would "destroy a great empire." Unfortunately for Croesus, the great empire that was destroyed was his own empire of Lydia.

Herodotus Histories, 1.80, p. 33. Cyrus instructed the Persians to "kill without mercy every Lydian they met--except Croesus".

539 BC

**Conquers Babylon
(frees the Israelites from
their captivity)**

529 BC

**Cyrus is killed in a
battle. His son Cambyses
succeeds him**

525 BC

Cambyses conquers Egypt, but goes insane and nearly loses his reign

Herodotus Histories, 3.30-2, p. 165-7. Cambyses murders his brother Smerdis and his sister, who was also his wife.

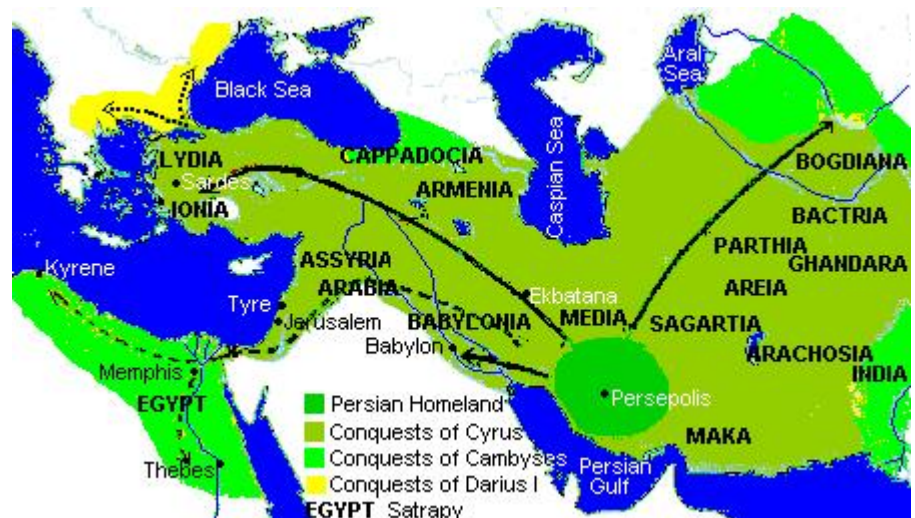
522-521 BC

Death of Cambyses leads to civil war and conspiracy

521 BC

Darius takes control of Persian Empire

Herodotus Histories, 6.98, p. 357. "Darius is equivalent to 'Worker' in Greek; Xerxes means 'Warrior', and Artaxerxes means 'Great Warrior'."



513 BC

Darius extends Persian Empire across the Aegean

Herodotus *Histories*, 4.118, p. 252. According to Herodotus, "Darius crossed into Europe, where he had already brought Thrace into subjection and was now engaged in throwing a bridge across the Danube, with the intention of making himself master of all Europe too".

499 BC

Ionians of Asia Minor declare a revolt against the Persians

Herodotus *Histories*, 5.36, p. 292. Aristagoras called a council to bolster support for the revolt. "His friends were unanimous in their approval, and all recommended revolt--with a single exception: the writer Hecataeus. Hecataeus was strongly opposed to war with Persia, enumerating the resources at Darius' command, and supporting his point with a long list of the nations under Persian dominion."

Ionians seek assistance from the Greeks

Herodotus *Histories*, 5.49, p. 296. Aristagoras spoke to Cleomenes of Sparta, "We beg you, therefore, in the name of the gods of Greece, to save from slavery your Ionian kinsmen. It will be an easy task, for these foreigners have little taste for war, and you are the finest soldiers in the world. The Persian weapons are bows and short spears; they fight in trousers and turbans--that will show you how easy they are to beat!"

Athenian assistance helped the Ionians against the Persians, but was short-lived

Herodotus *Histories*, 5.103, p. 318. "After [a battle at Ephesus] the Athenians would have nothing more to do with the Ionian rebellion, and in spite of frequent appeals from Aristagoras refused to help him. But the Ionians, in view of the injury they had already done Darius, pressed on the war with no less vigor, even without Athenian aid."

Despite their efforts, the Ionian revolt ends in failure, subjecting them to Persian rule

Herodotus *Histories*, 6.31, p. 333-4. The Persian fleet lay during the winter at Miletus. The following year it put to sea again, and took without difficulty the islands of Chios, Lesbos, and Tenedos off the Asiatic coast. Each island, as soon as it was occupied, was gone through with the drag-net--a process in which men join hands and make a chain right across the island from north to south, and then move from one end to the other, hunting everybody out. The Persians also took the Ionian towns on the mainland..."

490 BC

Persia seeks to punish Athens for assisting the Ionians

Darius sends a fleet of warships to attack Greece at the port city of Marathon.

The Battle of Marathon signals the beginning of the Persian War.

The Greek World

THE PERSIAN WAR – 490-449 BC

The Battle of Marathon

HERODOTUS "THE HISTORIES", VOLUME 22, 109-110 (excerpt)
<http://campus.northpark.edu/history/Classes/Sources/Herodotus-Marathon.html>

Herodotus (484-425 BC) is considered by many to be the founder of historical writing. In fact, he is often referred to as "The Father of History". In this excerpt from his greatest work, "The Persian War", he describes the crucial battle of Marathon between the Greeks and the Persians.

109. Now the opinions of the generals of the Athenians were divided, and the one party urged that they should not fight a battle, seeing that they were too few to fight with the army of the Medes (Persians), while the others, and among them Miltiades (Greek general), advised that they should do so...

...

Miltiades ... said as follows: "With thee now it rests, Callimachos (another Greek general), either to bring Athens under slavery, or by making her free to leave behind thee for all the time that men shall live a memorial ...

For now the Athenians have come to a danger the greatest to which they have ever come since they were a people; and on the one hand, if they submit to the Medes (Persians), it is determined what they shall suffer...

110. Thus speaking Miltiades gained Callimachos to his side; and the opinion of the polemarch (leader of Athens) being added, it was thus determined to fight a battle.

Pheidippides

HERODOTUS "THE HISTORIES", VOLUME 22, 105-106 (excerpt)

105. First of all, while they were still in the city, the generals sent off to Sparta a herald, namely Pheidippides an Athenian ... runner of long day-courses and one who practiced this as his profession.

...

106. However at that time ... Pheidippides having been sent by the generals was in Sparta on the next day after that on which he left the city of the Athenians; and when he had come to the magistrates (government officials) he said: "... the Athenians make request of you to come to their help and not to allow a city most anciently established among the Hellenes to fall into slavery by the means of Barbarians; for even now Eretria has been enslaved, and Hellas has become the weaker by a city of renown." He, as I say, reported to them that with which he had been charged, and it pleased them well to come to help the Athenians...

Pheidippides

A POEM BY ROBERT BROWNING 1812-1889 (excerpt)
<http://www.fullbooks.com/Graded-Poetry-Seventh-Year1.html>

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell, a suburb of London. Young Robert spent much of his time in his father's private library of 6000 volumes in several languages. This was the chief source of his education. Browning became an admirer of Elizabeth Barrett's poetry in 1844. He began corresponding with her by letter. This was the start of one of the world's most famous romances.

...

"Run, Pheidippides, run and race, reach Sparta for aid!
Persia has come, we are here, where is She?" Your command I obeyed,
Ran and raced: like stubble, some field which a fire runs through
Was the space between city and city; two days, two nights did I burn

Over the hills, under the dales, down pits and up peaks.
Into their midst I broke: breath served but for "Persia has come!
Persia bids Athens proffer slaves'-tribute, water and earth;
Razed to the ground is Eretria--but Athens, shall Athens sink,
Drop into dust and die--the flower of Hellas utterly die,
Die with the wide world spitting at Sparta, the stupid, the stander-by?
Answer me quick, what help, what hand do you stretch o'er destruction's brink?
How--when? No care for my limbs!--there's lightning in all and some--
Fresh and fit your message to bear, once lips give it birth!"

O my Athens--Sparta love thee? Did Sparta respond?
Every face of her leered in a furrow of envy, mistrust,
Malice,--each eye of her gave me its glitter of gratified hate!
Gravely they turned to take counsel, to cast for excuses. I stood
Quivering,--the limbs of me fretting as fire frets, an inch from dry wood:
"Persia has come, Athens asks aid, and still they debate?
Thunder, thou Zeus! Athena, are Spartans a quarry beyond
Swing of thy spear? Phoibos and Artemis, clang them 'Ye must!'"

...

Unforeseeing one! Yes, he fought on the Marathon day:
So, when Persia was dust, all cried "To Acropolis!
Run, Pheidippides, one race more! The meed is thy due!
'Athens is saved, thank Pan,' go shout!" He flung down his shield,
Ran like fire once more: and the space 'twixt the Fennel-field
And Athens was stubble again, a field which a fire runs through,
Till in he broke: "Rejoice, we conquer!" Like wine thro' clay,
Joy in his blood bursting his heart, he died--the bliss!

So, to this day, when friend meets friend, the word of salute
Is still "Rejoice!" --his word which brought rejoicing indeed.
So is Pheidippides happy forever,--then noble strong man
Who could race like a god, bear the face of a god, whom a god loved
so well,
He saw the land saved he had helped to save, and was suffered to tell
Such tidings, yet never decline, but, gloriously as he began,
So to end gloriously--once to shout, thereafter be mute:
"Athens is saved!" --Pheidippides dies in the shout for his meed.

**Pan - a goat-like, flute-playing Greek god who loved to party*