

Biblical Connections in The Curious Historian Level 2A

compiled by Tricia Kline, Bible teacher, author, and freelance writer

This optional, supplemental PDF for *The Curious Historian Level 2A (TCH2A)* draws connections between the historical context presented in the chapters and corresponding biblical settings and scriptures, theological concepts, or moral virtues. These connections can be used to aid you in incorporating biblical history into your study of classical history and to facilitate further discussion with your student(s). Icons in the teacher's edition indicate when to reference this PDF. This resource is intended for teacher use. To help initiate student interaction with the content, consider having students read the Bible passages aloud to you/the class.

Unit I: The Greek Classical Period

Chapter 1: The World of the Greek *Polis*

Paul's Preaching in Athens

Athens was a very large *polis*, around 1,000 square miles, compared to the average size of other *poleis*, which were usually about 70 square miles. The number of gods in the Greek pantheon was also very great. The Athenians' patron deity was the goddess Athena, from whom the *polis* got its name. The Greeks also regularly added to their religious system new gods from other parts of Greece and from the pantheons of surrounding civilizations. For example, the Greeks worshipped Isis, the Egyptian goddess of love, magic, and healing.¹

The vast number of gods the Athenians worshipped was one of the first things the apostle Paul noticed when he visited the *polis*. He said, "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" ([Acts 17:22-23](#)). He took the opportunity to build on the Athenians' understanding of religion and speak to them about Jesus Christ.

Completely opposite from the many gods worshipped by the Athenians is the one true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, spoken of in the Bible. Through His prophets and apostles, God condemned those nations that worshipped other gods. Sometimes even the people of Israel, His chosen nation, wandered away from Him and worshipped statues of false gods. God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to show how making and worshipping idols was useless. Read [Isaiah 44:6-20](#). What do these verses say about making idols and worshipping other gods?

Sparta's Religious Practices

The Spartans were known to be calculating and scientific, especially when it came to worshipping their gods and waging war. They carefully devoted themselves to religious practices throughout the year. The people of Sparta celebrated scheduled festivals and may have sometimes practiced human sacrifice. They were also very detailed in how they prepared for battle. Much of their preparation involved making sacrifices before a fight in order to gain the favor of the gods.²

In contrast, the Bible teaches that God desires something much more from His people than simply going through the motions with scheduled festivals and sacrifices. Read [Isaiah 1:11-17](#), [Psalm 51:16-17](#), and [Hosea 6:6](#) (which Jesus quotes in [Matthew 9:13](#) and [12:7](#)). What do these verses say that God is most pleased with?

1. Susan Deacy, "Famous Athens, Divine Polis': The Religious System at Athens," in *A Companion to Greek Religion*, ed. Daniel Ogden (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 221–235.

2. Nicolas Richer, "The Religious System at Sparta," in *Companion to Greek Religion*, 236–252.