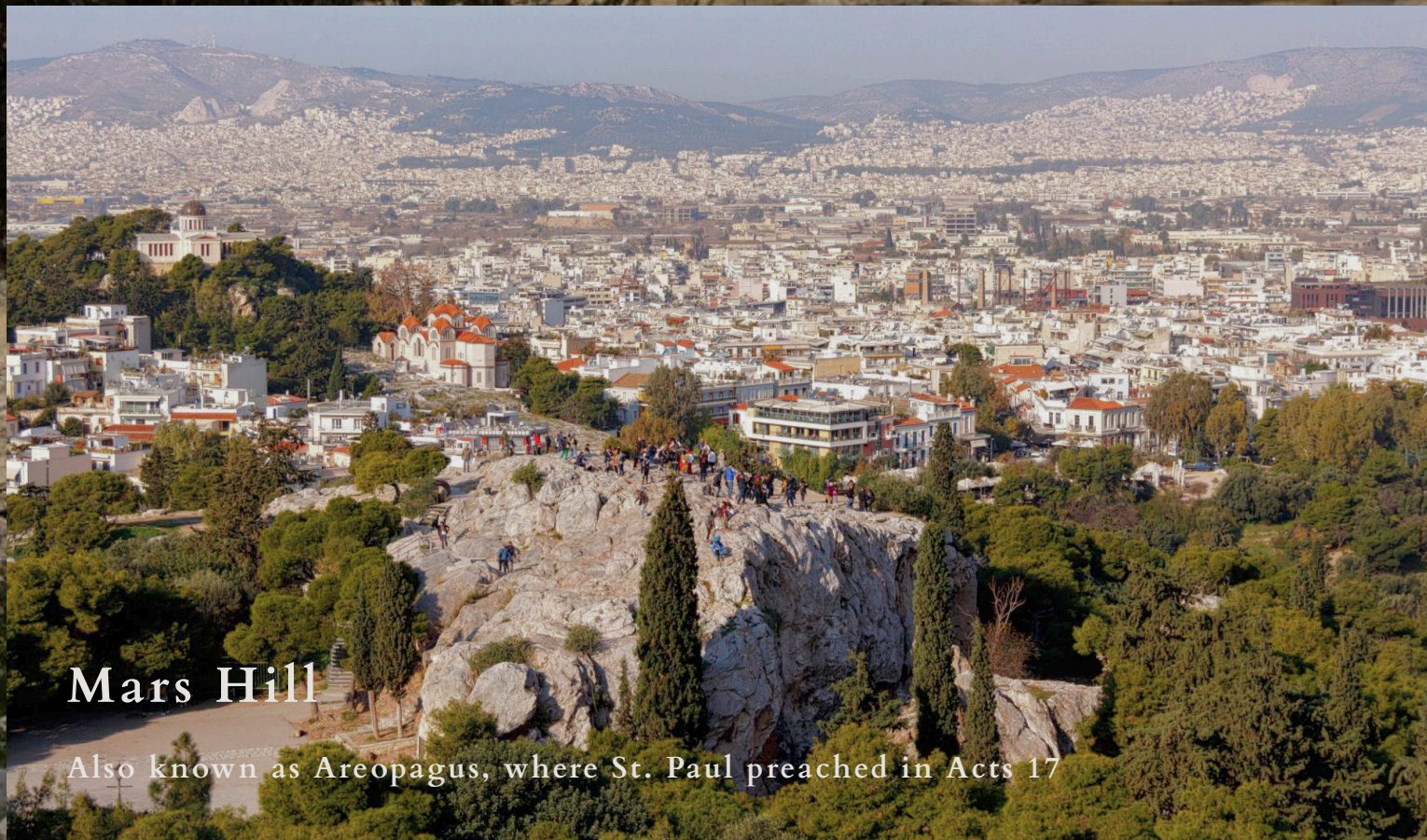


Athens

Day 3



Mars Hill

Also known as Areopagus, where St. Paul preached in Acts 17

Acropolis

Partenon, Erechtheum, and Propylaea structures represented the height of ancient Greek architecture, religion, and cultural identity.

Istanbul

Day 6-7

“Then we went to the Greeks, and they led us to [the place where] they serve their God. And we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendour or beauty, and we are unable to describe it. We only know that God dwells there among men, and that their service is better than [those] of all other lands. For we cannot forget that beauty,” reported the emissaries of Prince Vladimir of Kiev upon visiting the **Hagia Sophia in Constantinople** to study foreign religions in 987-988.

Byzantine Liturgy in Rus: The Making of the Kievan Primary Chronicle

Ayasofya Meydanı No:1, Sultanahmet,
34122 Fatih/Istanbul, Turkey



Hagia Sophia

Originally constructed as a Byzantine cathedral in the 6th century. It has served as a cathedral, mosque, museum, and again a mosque.

Same City, Different Eras: From Byzantium to Constantinople to Istanbul

The city was originally called **Byzantium**, founded by Greek settlers around 657 BC. During the Byzantium period, it was not yet the powerful empire capital and only became truly prominent after Constantine transformed it.

In 330 AD, Roman emperor **Constantine the Great** made it the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and renamed it **Constantinople** (City of Constantine). He did not just rename the city but essentially rebuilt it into a new kind of capital designed for power, defense, and influence, including legalizing Christian worship.

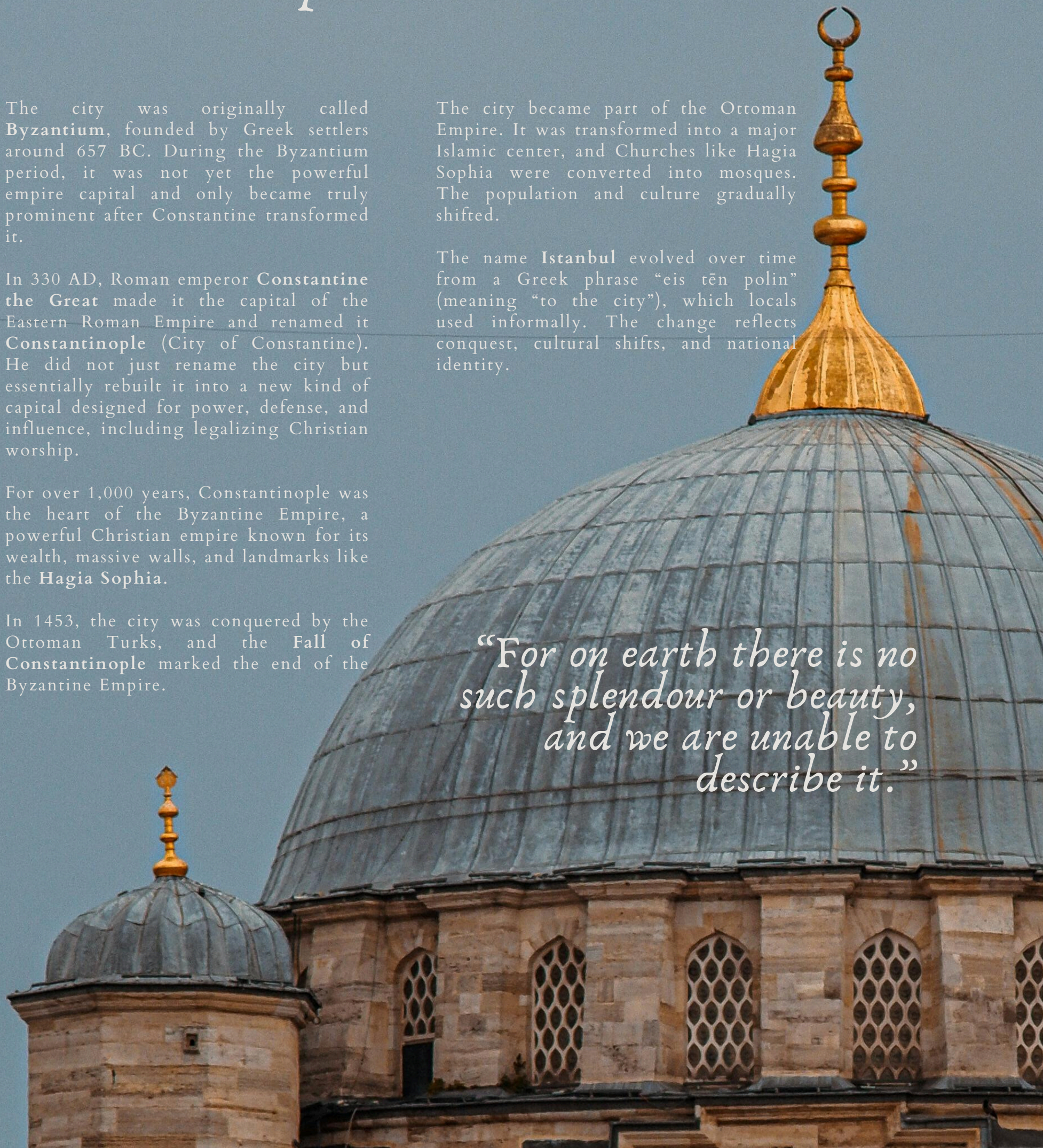
For over 1,000 years, Constantinople was the heart of the Byzantine Empire, a powerful Christian empire known for its wealth, massive walls, and landmarks like the **Hagia Sophia**.

In 1453, the city was conquered by the Ottoman Turks, and the **Fall of Constantinople** marked the end of the Byzantine Empire.

The city became part of the Ottoman Empire. It was transformed into a major Islamic center, and Churches like Hagia Sophia were converted into mosques. The population and culture gradually shifted.

The name **Istanbul** evolved over time from a Greek phrase “eis tēn polin” (meaning “to the city”), which locals used informally. The change reflects conquest, cultural shifts, and national identity.

“For on earth there is no such splendour or beauty, and we are unable to describe it.”



Kusadasi/Izmir

Day 8



House of the Virgin Mary

Bottom left: a small stone house on a hillside near Ephesus. This connects to Jesus' words on the cross entrusting Mary to John (John 19:26–27), where John the Apostle brought Mary to Ephesus for safety



Basilica of St. John

Top and bottom right: A monumental 6th-century Byzantine church and was erected over what was believed to be the tomb of John the Apostle