

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for the *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_cbtj.php

Alexander the Great and Hellenization

by Larry R Thornton, ThD
Professor, Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary

Historians have differed in their presentations and evaluations of Alexander the Great and his relation to Hellenism. It is not the purpose here to settle any of these questions. The aim of this article is to set forth the life of Alexander the Great in a brief sketch, to consider his achievements and motives as they relate to Hellenization, and to notice his conduct and achievements in light of God's prophecies and providence.

The people of Greece produced a culture that influenced the known world. The process of Hellenization began early "as a natural and unpremeditated admiration, unsponsored and unencouraged."¹ Archeological evidence exists for contacts between the Aegean and Mesopotamia as far back as the third millennium. In the late Bronze Age (1500-1200 BC) Greek traders sold products around the Mediterranean Sea. The influence or acceptance of Greek culture has been described as "Hellenistic" rather than "Hellenic" because the results were not purely Greek, but a mixture of Greek culture with the culture of the natives. It has been likened to a cultural veneer varying in thickness with the willingness or eagerness of natives to drink at the well of Greek culture. "But, mixed as the civilization was it was yet Greek in its appearance, and it followed Greek models, and so it remained" writes A W Blunt.² Thus it may be observed that the Hellenization process did not begin with Alexander the Great.

If Alexander did not begin this process of Hellenization, what part was his in this process? Was he the zealous missionary for Hellenism to a barbarian world as some historians' pens have described him? Was Alexander the Great providentially used of God in preparing "the fullness of the time" for the Messiah? These questions will be answered by studying the making of Alexander the Great, the movements of Alexander the Great, the memorials to Alexander the Great, and the meaning of Alexander the Great in God's program.

The Making of Alexander the Great

Any life seems to be a product to a certain extent of hereditary factors, environmental influences and providential happenings. This was certainly true of Alexander III who was born on July 20 or 26, 356 BC to Myrtale, better known as Olympias, and Philip II, king of Macedon.

Ancestral Contributions

Alexander was short by our standards. His body was muscular and fair-skinned. His hair was blonde and worn to about the shoulders. "His eyes were odd, one being gray-blue and the other dark brown. He had a somewhat high-pitched voice, which tended to harshness when he was excited."³ He carried his head to the left and up. Of his personality characteristics Benjamin Ide Wheeler writes,

While it was from his father that Alexander inherited his sagacious insight into men and things, and his brilliant capacity for timely and determined action, it was to his mother that he undoubtedly owed his passionate warmth of nature which betrayed itself not only in the furious outbursts of temper occasionally characteristic of him, but quite as much in a romantic fervor of attachment and love for friends, a delicate tenderness of sympathy for the weak, and a princely largeness and generosity of soul toward all that made him so deeply loved of men and so enthusiastically followed.⁴

Alexander had a greater attachment for his mother than for his father. He admired his father, but had an underlying competitiveness that may have revealed itself in his part in the death of his father. Historians describe Alexander as being concerned that his father would accomplish all there was to accomplish militarily, leaving nothing for him to achieve.

Educational Advantages

Leonidas, a relative of Alexander's mother, was his first instructor. An old disciplinarian, Leonidas emphasized feats of endurance which later proved beneficial for Alexander in his conquests. He was taught music, reading and writing. "Experts instructed him in the arts of sword-play, archery and javelin throwing. Like all well-born Macedonian children, he could ride a horse almost before he could walk."⁵ Lysimachus, assistant or successor of Leonidas, taught Alexander to love and emulate the heroes of the *Illiad*. His mother encouraged this since Achilles was claimed as an ancestor of hers. Throughout his campaigns Alexander carried this book with him and tried to surpass any accomplishments of this mythological person.

The most interesting feature of Alexander's education was that he had Aristotle for his teacher from about thirteen until fifteen years of age. From Aristotle he learned logic, literature and philosophy. Alexander as may be seen later did not accept Aristotle's view of barbarians. Alexander learned from him to humor the barbarian to win their coopera-

tion. His interest in scientific studies was created by Aristotle. Alexander had an interest in medicine, biology, geometry, astronomy, rhetoric, and eristics.

From his father he learned warfare, for at the age of fifteen he was regent of Macedon during his father's absence. At eighteen he had a prominent military post at the battle of Chaeronea (the battle which gave Philip of Macedon power over the Greeks).

Conditioned for conquest by his father, schooled in logic by the great Aristotle himself, inclined toward recklessness by his violent and passionate mother, Olympias, he was prepared, as perhaps no man has ever been, to dominate the world.⁶

Providential Privileges

Certainly, many providential privileges could be listed which Alexander enjoyed, but of special note are those which existed when he took the leadership of Macedon. One such providential privilege was Alexander's age of twenty when his father was murdered by Pausanias, a Macedonian nobleman. If Alexander had been younger and unable to take the leadership, he might never have had the opportunity because of power-hungry generals.

A second providential privilege was the privilege to take command of a well-disciplined, efficient war-machine which his father had prepared. The army consisted of the phalanx, cavalry, archers, infantry, javelin throwers and engineers who manned the object-throwing machines.

Still another providential privilege that assisted Alexander to begin his conquests was the support of philosophers and orators who were tired of the defects of the various kinds of autonomy prevalent within Greece. These men agreed that the Greek cities were doomed unless they united in some common cause like a crusade against the Persians. Isocrates, the school of Socrates, Xenophon and others encouraged the people to support such an undertaking as Philip planned.

A final providential privilege was the acquisition of an army who regarded the king as everything. This was an advantage not true of a commander of a Greek army. Fyffe asserts, "In a Greek army the soldiers were the citizens themselves, who as soon as the war was over, returned to their ordinary life; and the generals were citizens too, and were elected by the people."⁷ These privileges were providential in the rise of Alexander to the position of Macedonia's king and captain-general of the Hellenes.

The Movements of Alexander the Great

At the wedding of Alexander of Epirus to Olympias' daughter, Philip of Macedon was stabbed to death by a former homosexual lover, Pausanias. After order had been restored to the gathering, Alexander was presented before the Macedonian army as king. Alexander at once addressed the

people of Macedon assuring them that only the name of the king had changed, not the effective administration. Upon hearing of Philip's death, some Greek states and people on the frontier revolted. Alexander had been proclaimed as king, but now had to prove it.

Cessation of Revolts

The news of Philip's death caused Athens to award a gold crown to the king's assassin, though he too had been immediately killed. The Thebans and Arcadians refused to recognize Alexander's authority. The people of Thrace and Illyria revolted also.

Rejecting on his accession the advice of those who counselled slow deliberation in meeting the difficulties which beset him, with a few masterful strokes he reduced the kingdom of his father to order.⁸

With four masterful strokes Alexander brought order to his father's empire. He first offered Parmenio, a military general who had been supporting Cleopatra, Philip's wife after Olympias, the opportunity to fight with him with Parmenio's sons as key commanders. This removed the possibility of enemies gaining his assistance against Alexander. Secondly, he put down the uprising of the Thessalians and had himself elected president of their federation for life. Thirdly, he had himself declared to be head of the Greek Amphictyonic Council. With Thebes and Athens submitting, Alexander set out on a campaign to establish his authority in Thrace and Illyria.

While Alexander was stabilizing his frontiers, a false report of his defeat came to the Greek cities. The Thebans revolted with arms and money supplied by Demosthenes and the government of Athens. Upon his return Alexander marched to Thebes with lightning quickness. Offered a chance to reaffirm their support, the Thebans refused. The city was captured by Alexander's forces and the siege-engines. It was razed, the captives sold and the Theban exiles were outlawed from all Greece. This final decisive action struck fear into all who entertained thoughts of revolt. Alexander now had his home base somewhat settled so he could look to the campaign against Persia.

Conquering of Persia

Leaving Pella in the spring of 334 Alexander led his forces across the Dardanelles without interference from Darius' Phoenician navy. He performed a number of acts copying both Achilles his hero and Xerxes, the Persian whose actions he intended to repay. A number of the Greek towns of Asia Minor welcomed him as a liberator. With supplies low, Alexander hoped for a set battle quickly. His wish was fulfilled.

Battle of Granicus, 334 BC. A council of war was called by the Cilician seaboard and Spithridates of Lydia and Ionia, east of the Granicus River. The scorched-earth policy of Memnon of Rhodes which would have

forced Alexander back for provisions where he would find the Persians with a navy and army causing war in Greece and Macedon was rejected. It was a good thing for Alexander. The Persians positioned themselves on the eastern bank of the Granicus River. To the army of Alexander it was a death trap. Peter Green following Diodorus tells how this situation was changed:

Under cover of darkness—probably leaving all campfires ablaze to deceive the Persians—the army marched downstream till a suitable ford was found. Here they bivouacked for a few hours. The crossing began at dawn. While it was still in progress, Arsites' scouts gave the alarm. Several regiments of cavalry hastily galloped down to the ford, hoping to catch Alexander's troops at a disadvantage—as they had done the previous afternoon. This time however, they were too late. The Persians wisely retreated. Alexander got the rest of his columns across at leisure, and then deployed in battle-formation.⁹

The battle that ensued was furiously fought with Alexander's 43,000 infantry and 6,000 plus cavalry against the Persians' 30,000 men and 15-16,000 cavalry. During the battle Alexander was struck on the head so that the scalp was opened. "Black" Cleitus saved his life by killing his attacker when Alexander fell to the ground. Alexander struggled back on his horse to rally the men to finish the battle. The battle was finally won with the phalanx delivering a frontal assault. Memnon, the Greek mercenary, escaped to plague Alexander further. With this defeat Darius now took Alexander's Persian campaign seriously, if he had not before.

Battle of Issus, 333 BC. A number of significant events took place after the battle at the Granicus and before the battle of Issus. (1) The Greek cities of Asia Minor were permitted a democratic government which would join the Hellenic League. (2) The cities of Miletus and Halicarnassus were taken. (3) Alexander received news of Memnon's death caused by sickness. This caused the threat of an invasion of Greece by the Persians to be very remote. Alexander had already sent home most of his fleet at a calculated risk. W W Tarn tells why he did this.

In deciding to conquer the Persian fleet on land, he did not merely mean depriving it of bases; it might seize a base, as it did at Mitylene. But his proclamation of democracy had shaken the Greek half of the fleet to its foundations; for each city's squadron was manned from the poorer democrats and would slip away home when its city was freed.¹⁰

Alexander had made a wise decision and with Memnon dead the threat was certainly remote. (4) After passing through the Cilician Gates virtually unopposed, Alexander arrived at Tarsus where he became sick with acute pneumonia after a plunge into a cold stream while he had some kind of bronchial infection.¹¹ After three days he had recovered enough to show himself to the troops to keep their morale up. In the meantime, Darius awaited reinforcements from Babylon.

Issus was recommended to Alexander by Parmenio as a good place to wait for Darius. Following his own thoughts, he waited for him at the Syrian Gates. Darius desiring this move engaged in some psychological warfare.

Having got through the pass unopposed, he swooped down from Castabala on Issus, where he captured most of Alexander's hospital cases. Their hands were cut off and seared with pitch; they were then taken on a tour of the Persian army, turned loose, and told to report what they had seen to Alexander.¹²

From Issus the Shah of Persia took a defensive position on the northern bank of the Pinarus River which was behind Alexander. At daybreak, Alexander's army made its way to the battle area at Issus. In discussing the size of Darius' army, Tarn writes, "It did not number 600,000 men, and did not include 30,000 Greeks. Darius' army at Issus may have been somewhat larger than Alexander's, but it may equally well have been smaller."¹³ With the battle set and Darius not moving lest he lose his good position, Alexander charged across the Pinarus river with the sound of a trumpet. Once into the battle, Alexander endeavored to take the Persian king, for if he could be taken the army would be demoralized. Many men died protecting the Persian leader. Alexander received a wound in the thigh, but this did not stop his fighting. Aware of the danger of capture, Darius fled in a chariot and made his escape. The victory of Issus belonged to Alexander. Charles Robinson Jr states,

The battle of Issus is one of the great battles of history, for in essence it meant the end of Asiatic power in the Mediterranean. It also left its mark on Alexander for obviously Darius was finished or soon would be.¹⁴

Cities of the coast, 332 BC. It may have been his vanity that caused Alexander to cease following Darius. He wanted to finally crush Darius in another set battle; thus, Darius was given time enough to raise an army while Alexander gained control of the Phoenician seaboard. Having had his finances refurbished by Persian treasures discovered at Damascus, Alexander headed south. Byblos and Sidon surrendered, but Tyre refused to submit to his authority. Confidence characterized the Tyrians in their island fortress because it had withstood the siege of Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years. "Alexander at once prepared for a siege; he is said to have told his men that the fall of Tyre would mean the final dissolution of the Persian fleet."¹⁵

The island of Tyre...was protected by high, heavy walls of solid stone, two miles in circumference, and lay a half mile offshore; near the coast the water was shallow, but it reached a depth of eighteen feet at the island.¹⁶

Alexander ordered a 200 foot wide mole to be built to the island by which they could take the city. It took seven months to take the city and not without the help of conquered people and their ships.

From Tyre, Alexander marched south. It is reported that he visited Jerusalem. Some historians believe an actual visit took place. Proof of a visit to Jerusalem by Alexander is shown by the fact that there were

... Jewish soldiers in his army and part of the population of the city which he founded shortly after the supposed visit. Above all, the privileges which he is said to have conferred on the Jews including the remission of tribute every sabbatical year existed in later times, and imply some such relation between the Jews and the great conqueror as Josephus describes.¹⁷

Most historians and authors relegate this to legend.

After the fall of Tyre, every city along the coast submitted, except Gaza. It was located on a tell surrounded by sand dunes. It fell only after Alexander himself was again wounded.

Visit in Egypt, 332-331 BC. Welcomed as a liberator by Egyptian throngs of people, Alexander responded by offering sacrifices to their gods and ordering the restoration of temples at Karnak and Luxor. Peter Green says,

It is no exaggeration to say that the months Alexander spent in Egypt—from late October 332 to April 331—marked a psychological turning-point in his life...on 14 November 332, the young Macedonian was solemnly instated as Pharaoh. The impact of this revelation on Alexander can well be imagined. Here, at last Olympias' belief in his divine birth found a wholly acceptable context.¹⁸

After visiting Naucratis, the Greek trading port, he decided to find a better port where he could direct the maritime traffic which was once Phoenicia's. Opposite the island of Pharos was just such a place. He laid plans for its construct. It was to be named Alexandria. While in Egypt, he visited the Siwah Oasis to consult the oracle of Zeus-Ammon. He never shared what he had been told there. F E Peters speculates,

He was almost surely greeted by the priests there as Pharaoh, the divine offspring of Amon-Re. Another man might have been alternately amused or impressed; for Alexander the greeting could have been no more fantastic than his own growing image of himself as the scion of divine and heroic forebears.¹⁹

After Alexandria was founded on April 7, he returned to Tyre.

Battle of Gaugamela (Arbela), 331 BC. From Tyre the army journeyed through Syria. Alexander outwitted Darius twice before he engaged him in battle. Darius would be outsmarted no more. He made ready the land at Gaugamela. As he did this, Alexander gave his men six days rest for freshness in battle. Darius once again endeavored to use psychological warfare. "During this period Darius' agents tried to smuggle in leaflets offering the Macedonians rich rewards if they would kill or betray Alexander."²⁰ These were discovered and destroyed. On the day before the battle, the blond Macedonian saw for the first time the forces

of Darius. Darius had learned from the two defeats his army's weakness. "Darius had 34,000 front line cavalry to Alexander's 7,250: no amount of strategy—or so it might have been thought—could get around that basic fact."²¹ After studying the positions of the Persian forces, Alexander worked out an excellent plan. Peter Green explains:

Alone in his lamp-lit tent, by sheer intuitive genius, he had invented a tactical plan that was to be imitated, centuries afterwards, by Marlborough at Blenheim and Napoleon at Austerlitz, but which no other general had hitherto conceived. To reduce the vast numerical odds against him, and to create an opening for his decisive charge, he planned to draw as many Persian cavalry units as possible away from the center, into engagement with his flank-guards. When the flanks were fully committed, he would strike at Darius' weakened center.²²

The plan worked beautifully and once again the Persians were beaten with Darius escaping. Charles Robinson Jr evaluates this battle by saying, "Their fierce struggle can be fairly acclaimed as the greatest battle in antiquity, since it decided the course of all subsequent history."²³

Last hours of the Persian empire, 331-328 BC. Alexander marched his army straight to Babylon where he was received with honor as a liberator. His governmental plan in Persia differed from Greece and Asia Minor. Speaking of Alexander's appointment of the Persian Mazaeus as a satrap, W W Tarn notes,

He did not, however, give him the military command, but appointed a Macedonian general to the satrapy as well as a financial superintendent; henceforth, whenever he appointed a Persian satrap, he divided the three powers, civil, military, and financial, the Persians never having military power.²⁴

Susa was taken next as was the city of Babylon, but when he came to Persepolis on January 31, 330 BC he found the Iranian leaders opposed to recognizing him as the "Chosen One of Ahura Mazda."²⁵ In May Alexander saw their unyieldedness and set the city on fire. Seeing this as the end to the Hellenic crusade, Alexander paid off the troops of the League and set about to organize an army faithful to himself.

All this time the young conqueror had not forgotten about Darius. After Persepolis he pursued him to Ecbatana only to find him retreating to Bactria. News came to Alexander as he pursued Darius that Darius was now prisoner of Bessus, satrap of Bactria and Nabarzanes. Bessus claimed the title of Great King and called himself Artaxerxes IV. Darius, being of no value to Bessus, was murdered with javelins. "The Macedonian advance riders found him gasping out his last, and when Alexander arrived the Shah was already dead."²⁶ In analyzing the situation Alexander thought it best to claim to be the Persian king's legitimate successor and to hunt down Bessus as a rebel and a regicide.²⁷ The chase was on into the Far East.

Conquest in the Far East

A number of years were spent by Alexander in establishing his authority over the Persian satraps. Laistner summarizes,

His campaigns in these years took him as far east as Bactria and Soghdiana, that is to say, to Afghanistan and Turkestan. His chief opponents were Bessus, who had assumed the kingly title after Darius' death, and Spitamenes of Soghdiana, whose military skill gave Alexander more trouble than that of any other opponent. By the end of 328 both had been reduced.²⁸

Invasion of India, 327-325 BC. Ignorance of India's geography by the Greeks of Alexander's day caused Alexander to take India especially to see the ocean of the East. In the spring of 327 the armies of the conqueror crossed the Hindu Kush at the Kushan Pass. The rajah of Taxila welcomed Alexander, for he wanted his support against Porus, a ruler beyond the Hydaspes or Jhelum River. Porus refused to meet Alexander, except in battle. When the battle was fought Alexander won a physical victory but lost a psychological one with his army. His men were tired and had had enough of fighting, especially with armies with war elephants. Alexander tried to shame them but this time his use of psychology did not work. Alexander submitted.

Return to Babylon, 325 BC. Not forgetting his humiliating submission to return, the unforgiving conqueror sought revenge. "He was determined, by whatever means, to make the long trek a hell on earth for them all; and in this aim he unquestionably succeeded."²⁹ A number of battles were fought on the way home. In one at Malli he almost lost his life because of his bold effort to spur his men to action. His armies' journey through a desert area called Gedrosia was unforgettable. He lost 60,000 noncombatants and his companion cavalry was reduced from 1,700 to 1,000. In February of 324 the army and its leader reached Susa. Here he put down opposition which had occurred while he was absent. He pushed his policy of Orientalization. Leaving Susa in the spring of 324, they went to Ecbatana to escape the summer heat of the plains. After a campaign against the Cossaeans, tribesmen south-west of Ecbatana, Alexander led them to Babylon.

Conquest of the Conqueror

Was the conqueror, Alexander the Great, conquered by women, wine and wealth? Because of his access to the three hundred and sixty-five concubines of Darius and his marriage to Roxane and Barsine, Darius' daughter, Alexander may be thought by some to have been affected. This thought should not be entertained.³⁰ W W Tarn asserts.

He gives a strangely vivid impression of one whose body was his servant. This is the key to his attitude toward women; apart from his mother, he apparently never cared for any women; he apparently never had a mistress, and his two marriages were mere affairs of policy.³¹

Wine has been cited as his downfall. Peter Green writes that Alexander was drinking so heavily as to cause his Greek doctor serious concern.³² Yet Laistner rejects this.

But in June he contracted a fever from which, worn out as he was by his tremendous exertions, not by the intemperance which later detractors with insufficient proof have attributed to him, he never recovered.³³ Ancient sources all record a tradition that Alexander was poisoned.

Wealth could have been the cause because once it was Alexander's he did not have to deal with people and soldiers as men, but things to buy. However, after the riches of Persia were his, Alexander still responded to people as he had before. The latter part of his years of conquest seem to show a man consumed with the pride of his own ability and achievements. He may have pushed himself beyond his own ability disregarding human sickness. Alexander the Great departed this life on June 10, 323 BC at the age of thirty-two.

The Memorials to Alexander the Great

Basic to human nature is the desire to live on after this life is ended. This seems to have been Alexander's purpose. It is doubtful that he understood that all the memorials or reminders which he left behind would accomplish this, though he may have desired it. Alexander left behind records and accounts for historians' appraisals, Hellenistic culture, legends and romances, and an empire to divide.

Historians' Appraisals of the Records

It is almost impossible to be convinced that a person has arrived at the truth about many things in Alexander the Great's life. Not only do the historians of recent time differ, but even the records of historians who were contemporary with him differ. Some were paid by Alexander to write about him in a favorable light. Peter Green asserts, "Alexander was also, so far as we know, the first field-commander in antiquity to organize an official publicity and propaganda section."³⁴ In addition to the daily record of the expedition by Eumenes, there was written a literary history by Callisthenes, the nephew of Aristotle. Once news of Alexander's desire for this became known many historians and poets followed him for material gain. This difficulty to arrive at the truth may be seen by noting the differences of opinion concerning Alexander's ability and actions.

Ability as a general. From reading most historians and noting Alexander's achievements, a person would likely believe there would be no question as to Alexander's brilliance as a military strategist and general. However, even in his own day, after he killed Callisthenes, the Aristotelian school of historians debated with others "whether the achievements of Alexander were the result of luck...or were the product of virtue."³⁵ The hostility of the Aristotelian school explains their conduct. Most historians

agree with Fyffe's words, "In bravery, determination and high spirit, no man ever surpassed him."³⁶

Zeal for Hellenization. A common viewpoint pictures Alexander as a missionary for Hellenism. George Botsford writes, "His mission was to make Hellenic civilization the common property of mankind. This he accomplished."³⁷ Still many would agree with the words of William Hale.

Yet while he took with him the forms of Greek culture wherever he went, he had implanted little of its traditional substance: this was the tragedy of the conqueror who, for all of Aristotle's tutelage, had himself learned only its vaneer, and (as his readiness to change himself into an oriental despot showed) had never penetrated his heart.³⁸

With whichever one agrees, a person must admit that the tremendous Hellenizing influence of Alexander changed the world.

Accomplishments of administration. Some historians laud Alexander's abilities as an administrator. Charles Robinson Jr notes,

His solution essentially was to take over the existing forms of government and to assume a different relation to the various sections of the empire, much in the manner of the British monarch of a later day. In one part of the world, that is to say, he became king, in another a general elected for life or a suzerain or a god or the adopted son of a native ruler.³⁹

Yet, some historians agree with the Roman emperor Augustus' astonishment "that Alexander did not regard it a greater task to set in order the empire which he had won than to win it."⁴⁰ Alexander's constant problems with Greece and the satrapies of Asia revealed the lack of a good administrative program.

Father of one-race, one-world concepts. From a prayer by Alexander at Opis in 324 BC, after he and his men were reconciled, has come the thought that Alexander championed one-race, one-world concepts. E M Blaiklock points out.

Alexander's policies of union with the 'barbarians' may have been no more than the bold grasping of necessity, but so revolutionary were they to Greek sentiment that he at once became the symbol of a new ideal of mankind as one brotherhood.⁴¹

The author agrees with Peter Green on this subject who says, "It is idle to palliate this central truth, to pretend that he dreamed, in some mysterious fashion, of wading through rivers of blood and violence to achieve the Brotherhood of Man."⁴² Men are reading their liberal concepts into the life of Alexander the Great when they claim him as the champion of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man concepts.

The Spread of Hellenism

Was Hellenism for Hellenistic culture and its recipients' sake or was it for Alexander's sake? With Alexander, Hellenism was more persona-

lized and was not so much by intention, but natural action. R W Moss declares,

Alexander's greatest work was the spread of Greek influence, less from set purpose than as a result of his methods of recruiting his armies and organizing his conquests, and in ways that made this influence permanent and controlling.⁴³

Whatever the motive, the spread of Hellenism was a result of Alexander's short years. There were at least five actions of Alexander that account for the spread of Hellenism: the founding of cities, the minting of money, the training of soldiers, intermarriage, and the financial support of Greek arts and sciences.

Founding of cities. Some seventy cities supposedly founded for the spread of Hellenism have been credited to Alexander. These cities were populated with captives, natives and war veterans no longer able to follow their general. The purpose of the founding and the number of the cities are in question. F E Peters asserts that most of the cities were only military garrisons and credit for cities which his successors founded probably has been given to him.⁴⁴ Stating the purpose of Alexander's founding of the cities, C A Fyffe asserts,

With the exception of Alexandria, the colonies which Alexander founded were settlements of soldiers in remote districts, for the purpose of keeping the empire in subjection, not of making it Greek.⁴⁵

W W Tarn questions the number of cities founded.

He is said to have founded over 70, but that is a great exaggeration; 16 Alexandrias are certain, another (Alexandretta) practically certain, and there are one or two more perhaps just possible, together with an unknown number of military colonies.⁴⁶

The fact remains that cities and military garrisons were founded which encouraged the spread of Hellenism. In Egypt it was quarantined in the protected atmosphere of Alexandria, but in the Seleucid heartland it was scattered over the land by cities and military colonies.

Minting of money. Hellenism was spread by commercial intercourse stimulated by Alexander's monetary reforms. The Persian gold standard was abolished. Uniform silver currency based on the Attic standard was issued from a number of mints in his empire.⁴⁷

Training of soldiers. In order for non-Greek speaking men to function properly in Alexander's army, they needed to learn Greek and some of the ways of the Greeks. Before his journey into India thirty thousand native youths were recruited to be taught the Greek language and given military training.⁴⁸ Though Hellenism was spread this way, problems of jealousy arose between the Macedonians and the Persian trained soldiers.

Intermarriage. Though historians may differ on Alexander's motive for encouraging the intermarriage of Macedonians and Asians, it is nevertheless true that this happened.

At Susa too a great feast was held to celebrate the conquest of the Persian empire, at which Alexander and 80 of his officers married girls of the Iranian aristocracy...At the same time 10,000 of the troops married their native concubines.⁴⁹

Through marriage the men would share their culture and possibly settle in Asia. It is thought that little for Hellenism came as a result of these actions, for many bridegrooms died and many after Alexander's death repudiated their Asiatic wives.⁵⁰

Financial support of Greek arts and sciences. Using the wealth from his conquests, Alexander not only enjoyed luxury while he paid his huge army, but he supported the Greek arts and sciences. Philip Van Ness Myers writes,

He had fine tastes, and liberally encouraged art, science, and literature. Apelles, Praxiteles, and Lysippus had in him a munificent patron, and to his preceptor Aristotle he sent large collections of natural-history objects, gathered in his extended expeditions.⁵¹

Though Hellenism seemingly was encouraged and spread by these actions, it was affected for evil by the luxury and vices of the Oriental nations so that corrupted Greece corrupted Rome; thus, the civilization of antiquity was undermined.⁵²

Legends and Romances

Possibly because of Alexander's claims and commands concerning deification, many legends and romances developed.

Around him the whole dream-world of the East took shape and substance; of him every old story of a divine world-conqueror was told afresh. More than eighty versions of the Alexander-romance, in twenty-four languages, have been collected, some of them the wildest of fairy tales; they range from Britain to Malaya; no other story in the world has spread like his.⁵³

The demand for deification culminated in mythification after Alexander the Great's death. "By the time world-conquest came into fashion again, with Augustus, Alexander was already a giant, a demigod, a superhuman figure of romance."⁵⁴

An Empire of Divide

When Alexander died, his empire included Macedonia, Greece, all or part of present day Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Cyprus, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Soviet Central Asia, Pakistan and India.⁵⁵ The variety of Alexander's administration over various parts of his empire and the ambition of his generals led to the division of the empire. For a time a compromise arrangement existed between the nationalist supporters of Arrhidaeus, Philip III, and the general staff that backed the infant Alexander IV. This came to an end when Cassander liquidated Roxane and her thirteen year old son (310).⁵⁶ The struggle then ensued

between Alexander's generals until finally most of the empire was controlled by descendants of Ptolemy I and Seleucus I. It was an amazing feat for Alexander to acquire such an empire in less than thirteen years.

The Meaning of Alexander the Great in God's Program

The meaning of the life of Alexander the Great in God's program may be understood by considering Alexander in the prophecy of God and the providence of God.

Alexander in the Prophecies of God

Throughout his life Alexander sought divine omens concerning his activities and future plans, but to the understanding of the author he never looked at or was shown the Scriptural prophecies concerning himself. Scriptures describe Alexander's kingdom as an extensive kingdom of brass in the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan 2:32,39). The activities of the founder of this third kingdom in the destruction of the city of Tyre are revealed in God's Word (Ezek 26:1-6). So detailed is the prophecy of God that Alexander's characteristic method of conquest, his source of origin, his victory over Persia, his attitude toward the Persian empire, his self-willed actions, his greatness, his untimely death, the division of his empire, the strength of his successors and the extent of their authority are given (Dan 8:5-7, 21-22; 11:2-4). Commenting on Tarn's high praise of Alexander, John Walvoord writes, "The divine view of Greece is less complimentary than that of secular historians. God's view is different from man's."⁷ That Alexander had a place in God's program is surely evidenced by the detailed prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel which were given over 200 years before Alexander's birth.

Alexander in the Providence of God

Alexander the Great is a perfect example of one who knows nothing about God's will and ignorantly fulfills it (cf Prov 21:1; Isa 10:5-15). As a result of his conquests, many of the barriers which separated kingdom from kingdom were broken down. A language considered the most perfect expression of human thought and a culture were resultant which became the media for the flow and communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The stimulus given to commerce by the rediscovery of the sea route from Europe to India which caused the increase of travel and communication later resulted in a more rapid spread of Christianity. The demoralization of the Greeks and later the Roman world by the acquisition of the wealth and vices of the Oriental nations prepared the way for the acknowledgement of the truth by many that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Certainly Alexander the Great unknowingly played a part in preparing the "fullness of the time" in the providence of God. Arrian, a non-Christian historian, said that Alexander "like no other man, could not have been given to the world without the special design of Providence."⁸

Conclusion. Alexander the Great was prophesied in Scripture to lead the Grecians to victory over the Persian empire and to establish an empire. His life was providentially controlled by God to the accomplishments predicted, though all his life Alexander was ignorant of this.

The Hellenism of this blond Macedonian was not a result of his personal zeal for it, but of his methods of recruiting his army, organizing his conquests, and leaving remembrances of himself. These are seen by his founding of cities and garrisons, minting of money, training of soldiers, encouraging intermarriage, and financing Greek arts and sciences. A product of these actions of Alexander was a Greek culture accompanied by the precise Greek language which could be used for the spread of Christianity. Also this culture and those of it encouraged commerce between nations which broke down barriers and paved the way for the dissemination of the Gospel of Christ. Alexander the Great certainly had a part in God's program in preparing "the fullness of the time."

Table of Dates

356	Alexander born in Pella. The exact date is not known, but probably either 20 or 26 July	346	March: embassy to Philip from Athens Halus besieged by Parmenio April: Peace of Philocrates ratified Second Athenian embassy held up till July
	Philip captures Potidaea		July: Philip occupies Thermopylae
	Parmenio defeats Paeonians and Illyrians		August: Philip admitted to seat on Amphictyonic Council and presides over Pythian Games
354	Demosthenes attacks idea of a 'crusade against Persia'		Isocrates publishes <i>Philippus</i>
	Mid-summer: Philip captures Methone, loses an eye in the battle	344	Philip appointed Archon of Thessaly for life
352	Artabazus and Memnon refugees with Philip, who now emerges as potential leader of crusade against Persia	343	Non-aggression pact between Philip and Artaxerxes Ochus
351	Philip's fleet harassing Athenian shipping		Trial and acquittal of Aeschines
	Demosthenes' <i>First Philippic</i>	343/2	Aristotle invited to Macedonia as Alexander's tutor
348	August: Philip captures Olynthus	342/1	Olympias' brother Alexander succeeds to throne of Epirus with Philip's backing
	Aeschines' attempt to unite Greek states against Philip fails		

340
 Congress of Allies meets in Athens
 Demosthenes awarded gold crown at
 Dionysia
 Alexander left as Regent in Macedonia:
 his raid on the Maedi and the founda-
 tion of Alexandropolis
 Philip's campaign against Perinthus and
 Byzantium
 339
 September: Philip occupies Elatea
 Isocrates' *Panathenaicus*
 338
 2 August, Battle of Chaeronea
 Alexander among ambassadors to
 Athens
 Philip marries Attalus' niece Cleopatra
 Olympias and Alexander in exile
 337
 Spring: Hellenic League convened at
 Corinth
 Recall of Alexander to Pella
 Autumn: League at Corinth ratifies
 crusade against Persia
 336
 Spring: Parmenio and Attalus sent to
 Asia Minor for preliminary military
 operations
 June: accession of Darius III
 Codomannus
 Cleopatra bears Philip a son
 Wedding of Alexander of Epirus to
 Olympias' daughter
 Murder of Philip
 Alexander accedes to the throne of
 Macedonia
 Late summer: Alexander calls meeting
 of Hellenic League at Corinth, con-
 firmed as Captain-General of anti-
 Persian crusade
 335
 Early spring: Alexander goes north to
 deal with Thrace and Illyria
 Revolt of Thebes
 334
 Alexander and the attacking force cross
 into Asia Minor (March-April)
 May: Battle of the Granicus
 General reorganization of Greek cities in
 Asia Minor
 Siege and capture of Miletus
 Autumn: reduction of Halicarnassus
 334/3
 Alexander advances through Lycia and
 Pamphylia
 333
 Alexander's column moves north to
 Celaenae and Gordium
 Death of Memnon (early spring)
 Mustering of Persian forces in Babylon

Episode of the Gordian Knot
 Alexander marches to Ancyra and
 thence south to Cilician Gates
 Darius moves westward from Babylon
 September: Alexander reaches Tarsus;
 his illness there
 333
 Darius crosses the Euphrates
 Sept-Oct: Battle of Issus
 Alexander advances southward through
 Phoenicia
 Marathus: first peace-offer by Darius
 332
 January: submission of Byblos and
 Sidon
 Siege of Tyre begun
 June: second peace-offer by Darius
 refused
 July 29: fall of Tyre
 Sept-Oct: Gaza captured
 14 November: Alexander crowned as
 Pharaoh at Memphis
 331
 Early spring: visit to the Oracle of Am-
 mon at Siwah
 7-8 April: founding of Alexandria
 Alexander returns to Tyre
 July-August: Alexander reaches Thap-
 sacus on Euphrates; Darius moves
 his main forces from Babylon
 18 September: Alexander crosses the
 Tigris
 Darius' final peace-offer rejected
 30 Sept or 1 Oct: Battle of Gaugamela
 Macedonians advance from Arbela on
 Babylon, which falls in mid-October
 Revolt of Agis defeated at Megalopolis
 Early December: Alexander occupies
 Susa unopposed
 331/0
 Alexander forces Susian Gates
 330
 January: Alexander reaches and sacks
 Persepolis
 May: burning of temples etc in
 Persepolis
 Early June: Alexander sets out for
 Ecbatana
 Darius retreats towards Bactria
 Greek allies dismissed at Ecbatana;
 Parmenio left behind there, with Har-
 palus as Treasurer
 Pursuit of Darius renewed, via Caspian
 Gates
 July (after 15th): Darius found murdered
 near Hecatompylus
 Bessus establishes himself as 'Great
 King' in Bactria; march for Hyrcania
 begins (July-August)

Late August: march to Drangiana (Lake Seistan)
 The 'conspiracy of Philotas'
 March through Arachosia to Parapamisidae
 329
 March-April: Alexander crosses Hindu Kush by Khawah Pass
 April-May: Alexander advancing to Bactria; Bessus retreats across the Oxus
 June: Alexander reaches and crosses the Oxus; veterans and Thessalian volunteers dismissed
 Surrender of Bessus
 Alexander advances to Maracanda (Samarkand)
 Revolt of Spitamenes, annihilation of Macedonian detachment
 329/8
 Alexander takes up winter quarters at Zariaspa
 Execution of Bessus
 328
 Campaign against Spitamenes
 Autumn: murder of Cleitus the Black
 328/7
 Defeat and death of Spitamenes
 327
 Spring: capture of the Soghdian Rock
 Alexander's marriage to Roxane
 Recruitment of 30,000 Persian 'Successors'
 The 'Pages' Conspiracy' and Callisthenes' end
 Early summer: Alexander recrosses Hindu Kush by Kushan Pass: the invasion of India begins
 327/6
 Alexander reaches Nysa (Jelalabad); the 'Dionysus episode'
 Capture of Aornos (Pir-Sar)
 326
 Advance to Taxila
 Battle of Hydaspes (Jhelum) against the rajah Porus
 Death of Bucephalas
 July: Mutiny at the Hyphasis (Beas)
 Return to the Jhelum; reinforcements from Greece
 Early November: fleet and army move down-river
 326/5
 Campaign against Brahmin cities; Alexander seriously wounded
 325
 Revolt in Bactria: 3000 mercenaries loosed in Asia
 Alexander reaches Patala, builds harbor and dockyards

September: Alexander's march through Gedrosian Desert
 Defection of Harpalus from Asia Minor to Greece
 The satrapal purge begins (December)
 Nearchus and the fleet reach Harmozia, link up with Alexander at Salmous (Gulashkird)
 Arrival of Craterus from Drangiana
 324
 January: Nearchus and fleet sent on to Susa
 The episode of Cyrus' tomb
 Alexander returns to Persepolis
 Move to Susa, long halt there (Feb-March)
 Spring: arrival of 30,000 trained Persian 'Successors'
 The Susa mass-marriages
 March: the Exiles' Decree and the Deification Decree
 Craterus appointed to succeed Antipater as Regent and convoy troops home
 Alexander moves from Susa to Ecbatana
 Death of Hephaestion
 323
 Assassination of Harpalus in Crete
 Alexander's campaign against the Cossaeans and return to Babylon (spring)
 Alexander explores Pallacopas Canal; his boat trip through the marshes
 Arrival of Antipater's son Cassander to negotiate with Alexander
 29/30 May: Alexander falls ill after a party and dies on 10/11 June⁵⁹

Recommended

Maps: Peter Green, *Alexander the Great* pp 48, 93, 132, 165, 192
 Chart: James L Boyer, "Chart of the Period Between the Testaments" (Winona Lake: Grace Theol Seminary, 1962)

Notes

¹ George Willis Botsford, *A History of Greece* (New York: Macmillan Co, 1899) p 58

² A W F Blunt, *The Ancient World and its Legacy to Us* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1928) p 106

³ Peter Green, *Alexander the Great* (New York: Praeger Publ, 1970) p 38

⁴ Dorothy Ruth Miller, *A Handbook of Ancient History in Bible Light* (New York: Fleming H Revell Co, 1937) p 186

⁵ Green, p 35

⁶ Frank and Helen Schreider, "In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great" *National Geographic* (Jan 1968) Vol 133, No 1 p 5

⁷ C A Fyffe, *History of Greece* (New York: American Book Co, nd) p 114

⁸ Botsford, p 311

⁹ Green, p 96

¹⁰ W W Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1948) p 19

¹¹ Green, p 121

¹² *Ibid*, p 122

¹³ Tarn, p 25

¹⁴ Charles Alexander Robinson Jr, *Ancient History* ed by Alan L Boegehold (New York: Macmillan Co, 1967) p 328

¹⁵ Tarn, p 39

¹⁶ Robinson, p 329

¹⁷ John McClintock and James Strong, "Alexander" *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* Vol A-B (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968) p 139

¹⁸ Green, p 144

¹⁹ F E Peters, *The Harvest of Hellenism* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970) p 42

²⁰ Green, p 155

²¹ *Ibid*, p 156

²² *Ibid*, p 159

²³ Robinson, p 333

²⁴ Tarn, p 52

²⁵ Green, p 173

²⁶ Peters, p 45

²⁷ Green, p 185

²⁸ M L W Laistner, *Greek History* (New York: D C Reath and Co, 1932) p 395

²⁹ Green, p 237

³⁰ Tarn, p 111

³¹ *Ibid*, p 123

³² Green, p 258

³³ Laistner, p 396

³⁴ Green, p 90

³⁵ Peters, p 56

³⁶ Fyffe, p 115

³⁷ Botsford, p 317

³⁸ William Harlan Hale, *The Horizon Book of Ancient Greece* (New York: American Heritage Publ Co, 1965) p 350

³⁹ Robinson, p 322

⁴⁰ Green, p 258

⁴¹ E M Blaiklock, ed, *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervon Publ House, 1969) p 231

⁴² Green, p 260

⁴³ R W Moss, "Alexander the Great" *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol I, ed James Hasting (New York: Chas Scribner's Sons, 1928) p 307

⁴⁴ Peters, pp 61, 223

⁴⁵ Fyffe, p 121

⁴⁶ Tarn, p 133

⁴⁷ Laistner, p 398

⁴⁸ Green, p 201

⁴⁹ Tarn, pp 110-111

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p 111

⁵¹ Philip Van Ness Myers, *A History of Greece* (Boston: Ginn and Co, 1897) p 453

⁵² *Ibid*, p 454

⁵³ Tarn, p 144

⁵⁴ Green, p 260

⁵⁵ Schreider, p 1

⁵⁶ Green, p 260

⁵⁷ John F Walvoord, *Daniel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971) p 183

⁵⁸ McClintock and Strong, p 140

⁵⁹ Green, pp 13-16