

PERSIA, GREECE AND ALEXANDER THE GREAT

In terms of the Bible account, pages 67-68—especially page 68—are significant because herein lies the historical background for the Book of Esther.

The Historical Setting of Esther

The background for the Book of Esther will be found here in Langer's section on the Persian wars with Greece—especially the campaigns of 480-479 at Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea. If you want to know what happened prior to those battles, read the beginning of the Book of Esther into chapter two. Then, if you want to know what happened during the missing years in the Book of Esther—during the course of chapter two—read the story of these battles in Greece. And then, if you want to know what happened back home in Persia after the disastrous Greek campaign, and how Xerxes or Ahasuerus consoled himself, read the remainder of Esther.

To make a long story short, Xerxes consoled himself with Esther—a very simple solution to the problem! But he was apparently needing a certain extra kind of consolation which Haman was able to give him by flattering him and telling him what a great king he must have been, thus ingratiating himself with the king. That whole story happened after the debacle in Greece. (And remember that Herodotus tells the entire story of the Persian Wars in detail in the latter part of his history.)

More precisely, here is the chronological picture: Xerxes reigned 485-464—his accession year was 486. The third year of his reign, as mentioned in Esther 1:3, was 482. Then note that Esther 2:16 tells of the seventh year of his reign—478. This was immediately after the disastrous Greek campaigns of 480-479. Esther now became queen in place of Vashti setting the stage for the bulk of the Book of Esther.

The Decline of Greece

After the Persian wars, we can take a closer look at Greece proper. We find all kinds of wars among the Greek states here in the Fifth Century B.C. The First Peloponnesian War lasted from 460 to 446. It concluded with what was termed the "Thirty Years' Peace". The Second and Third Peloponnesian Wars occurred 431-421 and 414-404.

Note, however, that in this period the Greeks were rather constantly expanding in southern Italy, Sicily, Egypt, and even over into the Persian realm to the east! Actually, the Greeks were divided: Half the Greeks were anti-Persian; the other half was pro-Persian. There is an interesting parallel here with the later Roman Empire: The German tribes were anti-Roman and pro-Roman! And just as the Persians could never conquer the Greeks, the Romans were never able to conquer the German tribes. The Germans were in a geographic area the Romans were never able to get to. (Julius Caesar did have a brilliant idea. His idea was to conquer Parthia in the east, then come through Russia, and conquer Germany from the east instead of from the south—he couldn't do it from the south. The more he pushed at them from the south, the further east they'd move and there was no way of crushing them with finality. So his plan was to back them against the sea and thus force them to surrender. Brutus and his other "friends" put an end to this idea on March 15, 44 B.C.!)

So the Greeks were expanding. In Asia Minor the Greeks were pro-Persian. Ultimately, as you know, a power, Macedonia, united all these torn Greek states and then Alexander the Great launched his campaigns of world conquest.

If you read the detailed story of all this internal strife in the period of the Peloponnesian Wars I think, frankly, that you will be wasting your time. In my estimation, far too much time has been spent writing about these little, petty city-state squabbles. It's alright to have it written as a reference, but I don't think we should dwell on it at length. And that's why in many cases, even in the British schools, the feeling is, What value is that to life? You should know where to find it so that if there is a question you will know how to answer it.

The Time of Ezra and Nehemiah

The material in the 400's B.C. here in Greece in terms of the Bible has no significant bearing that I am aware of. That is, there is ^{no} connection of Greece with the Bible in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah that is of consequence after the days of Esther and the time of the Persian attack.

In other words, we read that Xerxes (Ahassuerus) got all the nations of his empire together to go to war against the land of Javan. Once that was resolved in 480-479, Greece, for the rest of the century, has no bearing on Bible history or prophecy. The bulk of the history in the Book of Esther involves internal matters in Persia.

And I think this is significant because, once Persia was repulsed by Greece, the Jews rose to prominence. This was now the time of Ezra and Nehemiah and the restoration of Jewish dominance west of the Euphrates. The Greeks were torn internally so they couldn't trouble the Persians. The Persians could therefore devote themselves to internal improvements, which made it easier for the Jews to rebuild their nation. Prior to this the Jews had had a much harder time due to their enemies even though the Temple had been completed in 515 B.C. /See the article "The Key to the Crucifixion Date" in the April-May 1966 Good News for a detailed discussion of the chronology of the Ezra-Nehemiah period./

The Rise of Macedon

Meanwhile, in the north, Macedonia is rising (note pages 76-78 in Langer). This area was much more wealthy and prosperous than Greece to the south. Philip II (359-336), the father of Alexander the Great, was a greedy and ambitious man. As the ruler of Macedonia, he was able ultimately, through a series of wars, to dominate much of Greece because the Athenians and the other city-states in the south had destroyed themselves in civil war.

At this time after 400 B.C. we find many Greeks lending themselves to the Persians as mercenary soldiers. We also find many Greeks entering into the armies of Egypt because the Egyptians had rebelled against the Persian domination in the 4th century B.C. under Ramesses III (381-350)—remember chapter 9 of vol. one of the Compendium, especially pages 227-229. This was the time of Dynasty XI—Egypt regained her independence.

Here is the point: While the Persians were employing the Greeks in the army, the Greeks were getting valuable military training! While the Egyptians were employing the Greeks in their army, the Greeks were getting the training!

Consequently, in many battles, there were Greeks on both sides! Thus, before the rise of Alexander, most of the wars that were fought in the 4th century B.C. were between Greeks supporting the Persian Empire and Greeks supporting the Egyptians against the Empire. That may sound peculiar but that was the case!

The very fact that the opposing sides had to use the Greeks implies that the Greeks were the best soldiers around! It shows that the Greeks were developing the armaments that made it pay to hire them, they were the best soldiers, they were getting their training, they were experimenting and learning. I think that many of the Greeks, though they may not have been conscious of it, were actually feeling or sensing that by getting this experience and training they would ultimately be able to do what Alexander wanted to do—take over the world! What happened in Spain in the 1930's before World War II? The Italians and the Germans sent their troops into the Spanish Civil War to test the airplanes, the tanks, test everything else. They said, "Aha, it works! Let's have a war!" What did the Japanese do? They didn't attack Pearl Harbor right away, they attacked China first—Manchuria—to find out how their war machine worked. So the Greeks, conscious or otherwise, were being prepared to conquer the world.

The Key to Placing Dynasty Twenty

This part of Greek history is very important in laying the foundation for understanding Dynasty XX of Egypt and getting rid of the problem of where to place it chronologically. That was the hardest dynasty I had to place. The reason was that I had never basically studied this 4th century B.C. in the Greek world—much less had I even studied that part of the history of Persia.

The key source is Diodorus Siculus. He gives the complete details necessary for understanding this period. You can find it in volume three of the Harvard Library Classics Series. Note page 228 of volume one of the Compendium where Diodorus Siculus, XV, 41-43 is cited. We take this up in Classical Literature. This is where the whole story is taken up. Langer does not even touch upon it. Until I went to this source, I had never ever read in any book the story of the struggle between Persia and Egypt—which takes place in the next century after Ezra and Nehemiah.

The Jews had gone back to Palestine and they were caught in the middle between the Persians and the Egyptians. They were an important factor in Egypt's wanting to become independent. They aroused a lot of Egyptian hatred. You see, the Persians had assigned all authority between the Euphrates and Ethiopia—all the country west!—was under the Jews. They were the tax collectors for the Persians (see Ezra 7:21-26). Read the Persian material where it is said that "you teach all these people the truth" and the Egyptians revolted against this, see?

Apparently the Arses [check spelling], who is the man who first collected taxes in the 5th century, is no one else but Ezra. That's the Egyptian name. I think they're the same person. Velikovsky has mentioned the same thing. I don't think we can get around it.

Now to return to our story. Philip II became king of Macedonia in 359 B.C. He engaged in a series of conquests resulting in the formation of the Greco-Macedonian empire. After the Battle of Chaeronea in 338, he announced plans for an Asiatic campaign (bottom of page 78 in Langer). In 336 an army was sent into Asia Minor—but then Philip was assassinated! This set the stage for the rise of Alexander III, the Great.

Alexander's Conquests Begin

Now we can take up the events covered on page 79 in detail. You should read a more extensive work about the personality of Alexander so you know what kind of a man he was. In the spring of 334 he crossed the Hellespont into Asia Minor with an army of 32,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry, and also 160 ships.

Notice at this time that there were Greek mercenaries still fighting on the side of the Persians. The toughest soldiers the Greeks had to face were the Greeks!

The first major battle between Alexander and the Persians was fought in 334 at Granicus in Asia Minor. Darius III was completely defeated by Alexander. At this juncture the Greek cities revolted from Persia on the coast of Asia Minor. Alexander then subdued Caria in southwestern Asia Minor. In the spring of 333 he's in Cilicia.

Why Greece Defeated Persia

Let me pause to emphasize something. The remarkable thing is that you cannot account for Alexander's victories unless you realize two things: One, there was a switch in power in Persia in 336 in the very year that Alexander came to the throne—the reign of Darius III began in 336; this switch at such a crucial time was not good for Persia. And, two, somehow it is as if everything the Persians did turned out wrong; and everything the Greeks planned to do, they didn't, and therefore it turned out right!!

Half the time the Greeks were caught off guard by the Persians at the wrong place—for the Persians! That is, the Persians would encounter the Greeks in some narrow valley—which was perfect for the Greeks, because what good are a million troops when you only have room for 50,000! All the Persians were stumbling over each other trying to get into the battle!

One time Alexander was sick. He couldn't go far enough to get to the place where he wanted to meet the Persian king, Darius III, on the open plain. He was so sick the troops couldn't move—Darius had trapped him in one of these narrow defiles! Well, this situation was ready-made for a Greek victory! You should read a detailed account so you can more fully realize what went on. It cannot be solely attributed to Alexander's skill and ingenuity, but he was a remarkable general nonetheless.

Notice this statement on page 79: "Since Alexander feared to come on to the open plain, Darius went behind him to the plain of Issus." See, this is the problem: In some way the Greeks had to get the Persians in an area where they couldn't win—and the Persians didn't realize that they were being lured by this little, frantic enemy!

The Significance of Issus

At the famous Battle of Issus in 333 Alexander attacked and completely defeated Darius III. Darius offered to give up all Asia west of the Euphrates and pay 10,000 talents—and make Alexander his son-in-law—but Alexander demanded unconditional surrender!

Students have asked, When should we date the end of the Persian Empire? The end of the Persian Empire may be dated 333, the Battle of Issus, or 331, the Battle of Arbela (or Gaugamela). That is, for all practical purposes, Persia

was defeated in 333, but one final battle was necessary to secure the victory. So 331 would perhaps be a proper breaking point though the story should not be considered complete without recognizing both battles. One should recognize them both as major events.

There isn't any doubt, if you read in detail the story of Issus, Arbela, and Alexander's conquest of Persia, that Alexander had to be possessed of a chief demon. Actually the Persians should not have lost to the Greeks; their military might was obviously superior! But there is every evidence that Alexander could see what was going on on the battle field as no mortal could have been able to see—and he directed his troops on the basis of that super-human vision. His vision was remarkable and, in reading the story in detail, I don't think it was merely the fact that he was up on some knoll viewing the battle. Without a doubt, you get the very strong feeling that he had "outside" help!

The cream of the Persian military forces fell at the Battle of Issus. Why? Because the Greeks did something in battle that had never taken place before, and the Persians were caught off guard and didn't know what to do about it! In almost all previous battles in the ancient world the practice had been to strike at your enemy's body and not at his face, but now all the Greeks aimed at the face. This meant that the enemy had to cover and hide his face whereas before he could shield his body and use his face and eyes. In this case the Greeks struck at the Persians' faces almost exclusively. Here was a new technique of warfare that literally confused the Persians.

There were many things in the Persian-Greek struggle for world domination that were most remarkable, that should not normally have happened unless events were supernaturally brought about. The angels really had decided what was to take place--the outcome of the struggle was foreordained (note Daniel 10:10-21). It was too remarkable, one of the classics in the history of military campaigns! This is commonly studied in all the military academies around the world. It is easy to tell what happened from the vantage-point of hindsight, but one cannot account for all the circumstances that happened in purely physical terms because of the fact that everything clicked too neatly, so to speak, in the Greeks' favor.

By contrast, the later campaigns of the Romans were different. Issus and Arbela form the classic illustration of two battles that decided the whole fate of history! Rome was a case of a great power constantly pouncing on little people. Always these little enemies of Rome were war-like and had to be made peaceful; they ended up defending their homes against pillage and plunder. That was the story of the Roman Empire; there was nothing beautiful about it--the Romans simply bullied the rest of the world! But there was something remarkable about the conquest of Persia!

We might also add that the collapse of the four divisions of Alexander's empire were also meaningless in this heroic sense. There was nothing great or classic about that. There was just a series of wretched battles, ultimately, between the king of the north and the king of the south. It was a story lies, intrigue, poisoning, intermarriage--you know, the whole sordid story summarized in Daniel 11. But the story of Alexander is unique.

√Note: The last six paragraphs above are based on statements made by Dr. Hoeh in his World History lecture of 11 March 1964. Inserting them at this point adds to a realization of the historic-prophetic significance of Alexander.√

Tyre Falls

After the triumph at Issus, all Phoenicia submitted but not Tyre. After a difficult siege of seven months, Tyre was reduced in 332. This was "New" Tyre.

Think of it!! All during that seven-month siege the Persians couldn't get an army together to fight the Greeks, attack them from behind as they were pre-occupied with Tyre! But remember that the Persians were slow like a lumbering bear (see Daniel 7:5). Yet, on the other hand, they're symbolized in prophecy as a ram (Daniel 8:3,4,20); they just didn't have the same kind of power as that he goat (Daniel 8:5-8, 21,22). (The remaining verses on Alexander and the Greeks are Daniel 7:6; 11:3-4.) For more about Tyre, see "The Proof of the Bible". (Ez. 26.)

The Persians were just slow. The Persian Empire almost ground to a halt because it was so big (composed of 127 provinces—Esther 1:1).

Alexander at Jerusalem

At this point one of the most interesting episodes in all history is left out of Langer's summary! Historians seemingly never want to bring in those things pertaining to the Bible, Palestine, Jerusalem and the Jews. That's why we have Josephus to help out in preserving the history for us.

After Tyre was taken, Alexander and his forces moved southward. The Jews at Jerusalem were fearful because Alexander was angry with them for not sending him men, money, and provisions to help in the siege of Tyre. The high priest at that time, Jaddua, had made an oath to Darius III that the Jews would never bear arms against the Persians. The assumption before Issus was that Persia, with its vastly superior numbers, could easily stop Alexander. But now the tables were turned, and Alexander had "threatened that he would make an expedition against the Jewish high priest, and through him teach all men to whom they must keep their oaths!" (Antiquities XI, 8, 3.)

Before Alexander and his army reached Jerusalem, God warned Jaddua in a dream and instructed him about what to do. The gates of Jerusalem were to be opened, and the city made ready; the people were to dress in white while the priests were to go out to meet the approaching Alexander wearing their beautiful linen vestments. This was done. Alexander met the company of priests, much to their relief, with utmost friendliness—even to the point of his "adoring" the name of God engraved on the gold plate on the high priest's mitre!

The Greeks thought Alexander was out of his mind! But he replied that he had seen Jaddua in a dream dressed in these very same purple and scarlet robes before he had ever crossed the Hellespont, and that he had been told he would be victorious over the Persians in his Asiatic campaigns! Needless to say, as a result of this preparatory divine intervention, the Jews and Alexander got along famously. He even offered sacrifice to God at the temple under the high priest's direction! What's more, he was shown the places in the Book of Daniel where he was mentioned in prophecy! (See verses listed above.)

This story is one of the high lights of Josephus! If it were in the Bible, it would be one of the high lights of Scripture!! Be sure to read the full account in Antiquities XI, 8, 3-7. Note: This editor's summary is based on Dr. Hoeh's comments in the Classical Literature class of 29 October 1970.

How Alexander Got Control of Egypt

Alexander did not decide at this point to put the finishing touches on Persia. Instead, he decided to go on an expedition to Egypt. He was unopposed; the Persians had withdrawn their army from Egypt. He founded the city of Alexandria.

Now, how was he going to rule the Egyptians who were always rebellious? How could he rule Egypt with the guarantee that the Egyptians would follow him? He had to come up with a special strategy. The ancient Egyptians had lost their rulers in 525-524 at the end of the two parallel dynasties, 26 and 19, remember? The prophecy of Ezekiel 30:13 had been fulfilled: "And there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt." And the Persians would never allow themselves to be regarded as legitimate successors to the ancient Pharaohs. They were oppressors, and were so understood! (Note again pages 208 and 217 in the Compendium, vol. one.)

✱ Alexander knew that the Egyptians would follow a man if he were a god-king, approved by their god, a reincarnation of their god! So he went out into the Libyan desert to the west—imagine, wasting precious weeks!—and there asked the oracle of the god, Jupiter-Ammon (also called Zeus-Ammon), whether indeed Ammon was his real father. The god dutifully bowed its head—the priests undoubtedly pulling the strings secretly behind the scenes (because this is the way it was done!). (Note the bottom of page 162 in vol. one of the Compendium.) And the god signified, in the presence of the Egyptians, that Alexander was his son; that he was therefore divine! (Mentioned on page 204 of vol. one of the Compendium.) Now the Greeks laughed at it, but the Egyptians believed it! Henceforth Alexander became the divine king of Egypt and the Egyptians then gave their overwhelming support to him. This was very important because he was now going to be the presence of the god, Jupiter-Ammon. You should read that also in greater detail. This is only the background to give you a little framework.

I do feel that, from our point of view, we would completely review what is important in history. This event should be emphasized as much more significant because this is in the sequence of the idea of divine kings who reign as incarnations of the gods—in this case, the Devil! How else can you read Daniel 2 and 7 without realizing this principle, that here you have this whole sequence of men, you see, who are—of course, it's the image of man—but it's the Devil who gives them his seat and power and great authority. Revelation 12 and 13 show that!

Persepolis Burned!

Leaving Egypt in the spring of 331, Alexander met and defeated the Persian army at Gaugamela in October and went on to Arbela where he seized much Persian treasure. Normally this is called the Battle of Arbela, but Arbela was the city which they finally reached after the campaign at Gaugamela—Arbela was the larger city where the treasure was located.

Babylon and Susa surrendered, but at Persepolis resistance was offered, so that the place was looted and burned and immense treasure was taken. Alexander burned Xerxes' palace at Persepolis, and with that perished, for practical purposes, All the ancient history of the world that had not already been translated into Greek!! All the records of Persia, all the ancient parchments there in the palace library, went up in smoke!! At first Alexander wanted to make Persepolis the capital of his realm because it was such a remarkable city, but in a fit of drunkenness or whatever he lost control of himself. There are various accounts of what happened.

The important factor here is that all the records that would have named Esther, Mordecai, and Ezra and Nehemiah—everything that would have supported the Biblical record at this point—vanished!! There isn't a thing left! This becomes important. You see why the evidence is gone! And if we did not have the Bible, we could have never known the events that are preserved in Scripture. That's important.

Going on: In the spring of 330, Alexander pursued Darius III through Media, where Darius was murdered by one of his own satraps. Then Alexander subdued the Caspian region and marched southward. Alexander feared a revolt—this was an internal problem within his own realm—and he had to have his own chief-of-staff, Parmenion, murdered; he was too powerful to simply dismiss.

Alexander Unfit to Rule!

In 329 he moved into Bactria and overcame the Iranians—Bactria was a very large area including parts of Persia, Russia and Afghanistan (check it on the map). Alexander now commenced the adoption of Persian dress and court etiquette.

In a drunken fury, Alexander murdered his friend Cleitus who had reproached him! You see, this man had no control over his emotions. He would just launch into a rage. It looks as if a demon would just simply get control of him from time to time and just cause him to do all kinds of things. He couldn't control himself. He wanted to control the world but was unable even to control himself! He was unfit to be the world ruler! He executed people because he feared conspiracy; in drunken fury, angry about something that is of no consequence, he murdered his close friend—I ask, Is this any way to run an empire?!!

He had 30,000 natives trained in Macedonian fashion for the army. So now he is adding to his army with local natives. He married the Persian Roxana. Now he began to foster a belief in his divinity as the best means of dealing with the Greeks as an absolute ruler and yet without offending their sentiments of liberty! So he even tried to get the democratic Greeks to believe it. Though the Greeks had deified living men before this, Alexander's move met so much opposition that he dropped it temporarily. It didn't work! The Greeks, unlike the Egyptians, simply would not accept the idea.

Soldiers Refuse to Cross Indus

Now we move on to the period 327-324. Alexander was now invited into India by Taxiles against Porus. In the battle of Hydaspes (326), he barely defeated Porus whose war elephants impressed the Macedonians. Then he advanced as far as the Hyphasis. Here the army refused to go farther. Rain, disease, and casualties had broken the morale of the Macedonians. To the soldiers there was just no end in sight. I mean, you could just go on and on and on and soon the soldiers would just be in an area where they would be getting themselves killed off in this tropical region, and be unable to enjoy any of the wealth that should come those who had won the victory. So, fearful of crossing the vast Rajputana desert, the army mutinied and refused to go on.

So Alexander had to turn back. He was furious and frustrated, but he had no choice. He and his forces returned via the Hydaspes and Indus to the Indian Ocean (325). From there Nearchus went back with the fleet to explore the Indian Ocean and Alexander turned back west through the desert of Gedrosia. They met

in Carmania and, after a rest, went on to Susa (324). So now he was retracing the route through Persia by which he had gone east before.

Wanted to Create One World

Langer next discusses the period 324-323: In his policy of fusion of the Greek and Asiatic peoples, Alexander had left in office many of the native governors (satraps); most of these, and many of the Macedonian satraps, were now found to have ruled badly; some had enlisted private mercenary armies. These satraps were replaced, usually with Macedonians; the private armies were ordered disbanded.

Then we confront this striking fact: Pursuing his policy of fusion, Alexander, 80 officers, and 10,000 men all married native women! (The story, in a little more detail, is this: To cement further his relations with the Persian nobility, at Susa Alexander took a second wife, Darius' daughter Statira; the 80 women his officers married were of the Iranian aristocracy.)

He was going to make one people and one world! He was the first man to conceive of a catholic world! There is a very important fact which is not mentioned here in Langer: When Alexander got to Babylon, he broke up the schools of the Chaldean priests and scattered them all over the empire with the hope that they would promulgate one religion. He wanted one world religion! They ultimately gravitated to Samaria because there were competitive priesthoods in these other countries that didn't want them, and their own people were in Samaria.

So what happened is that Alexander set the example of intermarriage and then thousands and thousands of Greeks intermarried with the people throughout the Persian realm—10,000 here and many others later. As a result, many people in the Middle East to this very day are part Greek! There are many Russians today in the Ukraine who are part Greek. We even have a Vice President who is at least half Greek—but a high class Greek! The caliber of Onassis, maybe better.

Alexander paid all debts of his men. He ordered all exiles recalled by the Greek cities; to give himself a basis for this interference, contrary to the constitution of the Hellenic League, he ordered the Greek states to recognize him as the son of Zeus Ammon! So, you see, he claimed the divine right and he was now going to be a divine king! And you discover, that, for a long time after this, there will be the development of divine kings. Thus the Ptolemies and Seleucids were called by names meaning "god manifest" (Epiphanes), "savior" (Soter), "god" (Theos)—all kinds of blasphemous titles! Almost as bad as the Pope! (Note pages 93, 96-97 in Langer on these rulers.)

He next planned to launch an attack^{on} North Africa and he was going to conquer Italy. Over 25 cities which he had founded served to Hellenize the east, but his policy of direct fusion failed! Dr. Farrow touched on this in a humorous vein in his article "But Do Educators have the Answer?" in the October 1968 Plain Truth where he had Alexander saying to Julius Caesar, "Julius, old friend, I was sure I had the solution—conquer 'em and then marry 'em. That way you keep it all in the family. But you know, somehow it didn't work. We finally developed a monumental case of incompatibility!" In other words, try as they might, even though they first intermarried, the end-result was that all the peoples of the East and the Greeks still were incompatible. And it just means that they shared a few genes, but simply could not fuse the two.