

# What Happened After the Old Testament?

## The Decline of the Persian Empire

At the close of the Old Testament, the Mediterranean world was under the power of the Persian Empire. The last king mentioned in the Bible is Darius the Persian (Daniel 12:22), who is most likely Darius III. However, the last king of significance to Old Testament history is Artaxerxes I, under whose reign Ezra and Nehemiah returned. During the Assyrian and Babylonian periods, the rulers believed in the diffusion of ethnic groups, the goal of which was to destroy national unity and minimize the possibility of rebellion. However, under Persian rule, Cyrus (559-530 BC) decreed the return of exiles to their own land. It was believed that the empire would be better managed if people lived in their native land, and practiced their own religion. While these facts serve as the earthly explanation for the late Old Testament history, Scripture makes it clear that God had his own purposes in ordaining these events (2 Kings 17; 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Isaiah 44:23-28). Beginning with the reign of Artaxerxes I, the Persian Empire was under severe decline. However, the Persians and Greeks had already been fighting for years. The two nations battled in Cyprus in 497 BC. What is known as the Persian Wars had begun when Persia invaded Greece in 490 BC. The last of the most concentrated conflicts occurred in 479 BC when the Greeks defeated the Persians. But it was not until 449 BC that the Persian Wars ended. While the Persians had recognized the independence of Greek cities, it was not until Darius III that the Persian Empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great.

### The Last Persian Kings

Artaxerxes I (464-423 BC)  
*Return of Ezra and Nehemiah*

Darius II (424-404 BC)

Artaxerxes II (404-358)

Artaxerxes III (358-338 BC)

Darius III (336-331 BC)  
*Defeated by Alexander the Great*

## Who was Alexander the Great?

Philip II, king of Macedonia, had brought the Greek world to unity under his power. Ancient Macedonia was located in the northern part of modern Greece. Today, Macedonia is a small country north of Greece. The regions that he conquered included all of Greece (except for Sparta), and Thrace (the land stretching from the Aegean Sea to the Black Sea). Philip's plan was to overthrow the Persian control of Asia Minor (Turkey). However, when his son Alexander (b. 356 BC) inherited the throne, he began a conquest which would result in an empire larger than any that had previously existed. When Alexander was thirteen, he began to study under the philosopher Aristotle. His learning under the philosopher motivated him in the belief that Hellenism (the Greek way of life) must be experienced throughout the world. This is evidenced by the fact that Alexander not only brought works of Homer on his conquests, but also philosophers who traveled with his armies. Under Aristotle,

Then he said, "Do you know why I have come to you? But now I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come.

*Daniel 10:20*

Alexander was escorted into Jerusalem by the high priest and his attendants. He went up to the temple, where he sacrificed to God according to the high priest's directions. And when the book of Daniel [chapter 8] was shown to him, which predicted that one of the Greeks would destroy the Persian empire, he thought himself to be the so designated.

*Josephus, Antiquities, XI.ii.v*

As for the ram that you saw with the two horns, these are the kings of Media and Persia. And the goat is the king of Greece. And the great horn between his eyes is the first king. As for the horn that was broken, in place of which four others arose, four kingdoms shall arise from his nation, but not with his power.

*Daniel 8:20-22*

## THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD: LESSON 1

Alexander had learned philosophy, ethics, politics, science, and medicine. Perhaps Alexander went to an American public school, because he had a lot of self-esteem. In addition to claiming that he descended from Achilles and Hercules, he believed that he had some kind of divine ancestry.

When Philip died in 336 BC, Alexander spent the first two years of his reign securing his position as king as well as securing the borders of the Macedonian empire. This included demolishing the city of Thebes, and selling many of its citizens into slavery. As stated above, in 334 BC, he began his conquest against the Persian Empire.



You will use **Map 1** to follow the events of Alexander's conquest. As you read through the sequence of Alexander's conquest, use **red** to move to each city that is in **bold** (don't move to a city until you see it in bold). There are other details you will label. Starting in **Pella**, Alexander battled Darius III's army in the city of **Troy**. His army of 35,000 was enough to advance to Side which gained him the region of Caira. In order to get to Side, make sure you pass through **Ephesus**, **Miletus**, **Xanthus**, **Halicarnassus**, and **Phaselis**. Some of the markers for the city names may be difficult to identify. Make sure to stay along the coast until you get to **Perga**. Alexander advanced through these cities with relative ease. However, because Halicarnassus had opposed Alexander, he burned down the city. From Perga, make one arrow toward **Side**, but do not pass through it. Continue your path up to **Gordion** and **Ancyra**. This had given Alexander Asia Minor. After passing through the **Cilician Gates**, Alexander met Darius III at **Issus**. Darius ran for his life. Alexander's army captured people and loot from the Persian army, possibly including Darius' family. It was at this point that the Persians were on the losing side. Mark a red asteric (\*) in between the Cilician Gates and Issus. Where you can find room, label: **Alexander routed Darius III**. The army now headed for Egypt going through Judea to get there. **Tripolis** and **Sidon** were easily gained (do not go through Aleppo yet), but **Tyre** took seven months to completely overpower in 332 BC. This not only allowed Alexander to have complete access to Judea, but also meant that the Persians had no ports into the Mediterranean Sea. Mark a red asteric at Tyre. At **Gaza**, Alexander was opposed again, and it took him two months to gain. Include another red asteric here. As he had moved toward Gaza, he had parts of his army move towards Damascus, and Samaria. Before going into Egypt, Alexander went **Jerusalem**. The ancient historian Josephus gives us a colorful account of the event. Josephus was a Jewish historian who lived from about AD 37-100. Although often scattered with bias, his writings are tremendously helpful in understanding New



## THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD: LESSON 1

When Jaddua, the high priest, heard that Alexander was coming, he was terrified, and ordered his people to join him in sacrifice and prayer to God. Appearing to him in a dream, God told him to take courage and decorate the city with wreaths. The people were to clothe themselves in white and the priests with the robes of their order. Then they were to march out of the gates to meet the Macedonians, for they would not be harmed. Jaddua awoke rejoicing, and announced the revelation to all. When he learned that Alexander was not far from the city, he went out in procession with the priests and the people. Alexander saw the procession coming toward him: the priests were clothed in linen and the high priest in a robe of blue and gold. On his head was a miter with the gold plate on which God's name was inscribed. Approaching the throne, Alexander prostrated himself before the Name and greeted the high priest. As the Jews welcomed Alexander with one voice and encircled him, his officers wondered if he had suddenly become insane. One of them Parmenio, went up to Alexander and asked him to explain. He replied, "When I was at Dium in Macedonia, considering how I could become a master of Asia, I saw this very person in my sleep, dressed as he is now. He urged me not to delay, but to cross over confidently and take dominion over the Persians." Alexander was escorted into Jerusalem by the high priest and his attendants. He went up into the temple, where he sacrificed to God according to the high priest's directions. And when the book of Daniel was shown to him, which predicted that one of the Greeks would destroy the Persian empire, he thought himself to be the one so designated. When he offered the Jews whatever they desired, the high priest asked that they might observe their own laws and be exempt from the tribute every seventh year. Alexander granted these requests. They further asked that the Jews in Babylon and Media be allowed their own laws, and he also agreed. Finally he told the people that if any of them wanted to enlist in his army, he would allow them to continue their own customs, and many joined his army.

*The Jewish Antiquities*, XI, iix:iv-v

From: Paul Maier, ed., *Josephus: The Essential Writings*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1988), 199-200.

Testament history. The great significance of this event is that on this occasion, Hellenism was introduced to the land of Israel, and Jewish culture. Though the Greek Empire would not have a long political presence, the Hellenistic culture that it brought made a permanent mark on the Near East, in which the New Testament is set. When Alexander entered Egypt (passing through **Pelusium**), he was gladly welcomed. The gates of **Memphis** were opened to Alexander, and he practically became an Egyptian. When he sacrificed to the sacred bull god, Apis, he was named successor of Pharaoh. A new city, **Alexandria** (remember that self-esteem) was founded at the mouth of the Nile, which eventually functioned as the great sea port of the Mediterranean world, as was Tyre. Before he left Egypt, Alexander went to Amon (east of Memphis and close to Libya) where he was greeted by the priest of the god Amon, and was again recognized as Pharaoh. By 331 BC, the conquest continued back up through **Jerusalem**, **Damascus**, **Emesa**, **Aleppo**, **Thapsacus**, and to **Gaugamela**. At this point, Alexander and Darius met again and for the last time. Though Darius was prepared with substantial reinforcement (chariots and elephants), he fled toward the Caspian Sea, while Alexander moved south desiring to gain control of powerful cities. The welcoming in **Babylon** was festive as he was greeted with celebration and given treasures. In response, Alexander rebuilt the ruins of the god Marduk. **Susa** was the next location, which was Persia's capital. In **Persopolis**, the palace of Xerxes was burned. This was done out of revenge,

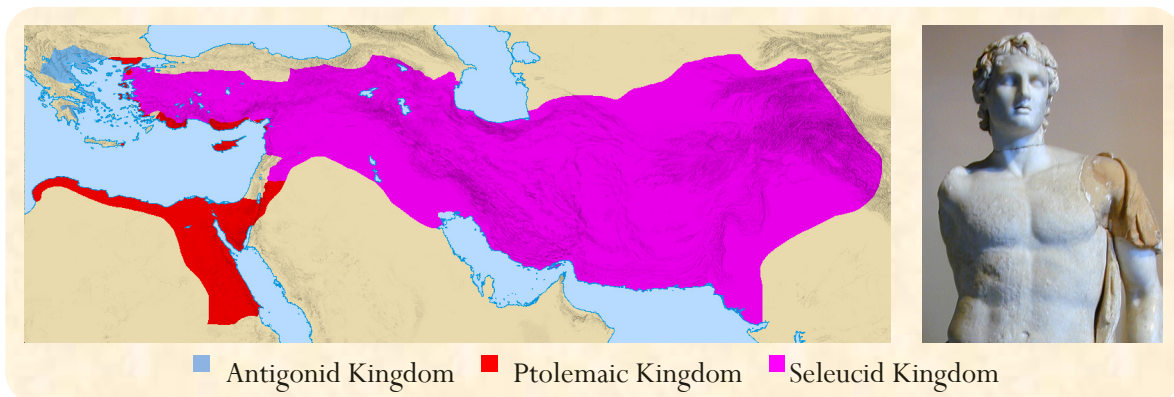


## THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD: LESSON 1

because Xerxes had burned Athens during his reign. Travelling through **Pasargadae**, when Alexander arrived in **Ecbatana**, all of Persia had been conquered; Alexander was officially recognized as Emperor. Not long after this Darius was killed by his own man in 331 BC. You may draw a ☠ south of the Caspian Sea, and label: **Darius killed in 331 BC**. The next segment of Alexander's life involved moving towards India.

The following markings are less specific, because they are not as important for our purposes. From Ecbatana, move along the north and then drop south, going under **Alexandria of Archosia**, and northeast towards Taxila, but not go there yet. Just before reaching the Indus River, sweep northwest, up to **Bactra** and then to **Marakanda**. While in this region, the troops refused to continue the conquest. As a result, Alexander eventually moved back toward Babylon. Travel the same route down to **Taxila**, and then all the way to where the Indus River hooks back to the east, but staying on the west side of the Hydaspes River until it meets the Indus. From that point, move through **Hermozia**, **Persepolis**, **Susa**, to **Babylon**. Babylon was Alexander's headquarters where he began to plan a naval mission. However, just before his ships set sail, he died of a fever at the age of 33 in 323 BC. You may mark a ☠ near Babylon and label it: **Alexander died, 323 BC**.

Alexander is called "The Great" for his amazing conquest of Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Western India, and Egypt. No kingdom of this magnitude had been known previous to this time, and all under the command of a single figure. Just as God had his own purpose with the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian kingdoms, so he did with Alexander. When Alexander's "greatness," is spoken of, what normally comes to mind is the fact that a young man so quickly subdued rulers and people under his authority. However, it only took a fever to bring him to an end. A mere sickness took the life of what thousands of Persian soldiers could not do. It is not always appropriate for us to look back on history and determine what God's purposes are. However, the Scriptures make it clear that Alexander was an instrument in God's mighty hand. Perhaps it is most appropriate for us to think of Alexander's greatness because he was used by our great God for his great and awesome plan. If you found excitement in the adventure of Alexander's story, be prepared to find far more excitement in what God has done among all nations in his Son. Because Alexander's death was so unexpected, efforts to gain Alexander's throne were vied by many. The details of the conflict are not important for our lesson. However, it is necessary to understand that three distinct kingdoms existed by 275 BC. In the next two lessons, you will learn more details about the descendants of the founders of the kingdoms, and how this is related to the Maccabean revolt and the presence of the Roman Empire. At the end of each lesson you will find five or six Koine Greek words. If you decide to memorize these, by the end of lesson 18 you will know one hundred Greek words. Because of the spread of Hellenism, Koine Greek had become the common language of the New



## THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD: LESSON 1

Testament world. Although Aramaic was spoken by all Jews, and Hebrew was spoken by many, all of the New Testament was written in Greek. In the next lesson, you will learn about how Ptolemaic and Seleucid influence on Israel had given parts of Jewish culture a new Hellenistic identity. If you have experience with a language other than English, you know that there are times when a word-for-word translation is virtually impossible. Therefore, extra explanation is necessary for an audience to understand what is being said. There are a wide variety of good English Bibles. However, having exposure to New Testament Greek will allow you to see a more colorful picture of the New Testament. You will see what is meant by this in subsequent lessons.



The Greek Alphabet				Greek Vocabulary Words			
Capital	Lowercase	Name	Pronunciation	Greek	Pronunciation	English	Part of Speech
<b>A</b>	<b>a</b>	Alpha	a (t <u>a</u> co)	<b>Qeo~</b>	<i>Theos</i>	<b>God</b>	<i>noun</i>
<b>B</b>	<b>b</b>	Beta	b (n <u>a</u> b)	<b>Cristo~</b>	<i>Christos</i>	<b>Christ</b>	<i>noun</i>
<b>G</b>	<b>g</b>	Gamma	g (gr <u>i</u> n)	<b>Iesu~</b>	<i>Ee-ay-soos</i>	<b>Jesus</b>	<i>noun</i>
<b>D</b>	<b>d</b>	Delta	d (d <u>u</u> de)	<b>ἄνθρωπος</b>	<i>anthropos</i>	<b>a man</b>	<i>noun</i>
<b>E</b>	<b>e</b>	Epsilon	short e (m <u>e</u> n)	<b>ἀπό</b>	<i>a-paa</i>	<b>from</b>	<i>preposition</i>
<b>Z</b>	<b>z</b>	Zeta	z (b <u>u</u> zz)**				
<b>H</b>	<b>h</b>	Eta	long e (s <u>ee</u> k)				
<b>Q</b>	<b>q</b>	Theta	th (th <u>i</u> s)				
<b>I</b>	<b>i</b>	Iota	i (m <u>i</u> ster)				
<b>K</b>	<b>k</b>	Kappa	k (k <u>i</u> ck)				
<b>L</b>	<b>l</b>	Lambda	l (l <u>i</u> sten)				
<b>M</b>	<b>m</b>	Mu	m (m <u>oo</u> )				
<b>N</b>	<b>n</b>	Nu	n (n <u>ew</u> )				
<b>X</b>	<b>x</b>	Xsi	x (a <u>x</u> e)				
<b>O</b>	<b>o</b>	Omicron	short o (o <u>n</u> )				
<b>P</b>	<b>p</b>	Pi	p (p <u>e</u> pper)				
<b>R</b>	<b>r</b>	Rho	r (r <u>i</u> ot)				
<b>S</b>	<b>s/~*</b>	Sigma	s (s <u>to</u> p)				
<b>T</b>	<b>t</b>	Tau	t (t <u>i</u> me)				
<b>U</b>	<b>u</b>	Upsilon	u (oo)				
<b>F</b>	<b>f</b>	Phi	ph (p <u>h</u> oto)				
<b>C</b>	<b>c</b>	Chi	ch (Ch <u>r</u> ist)				
<b>Y</b>	<b>y</b>	Psi	ps (ps <u>y</u> cho)				
<b>W</b>	<b>w</b>	Omega	long o (h <u>o</u> me)				

The Greek language that was common during the time of the New Testament was not what Greek had always been and is not identical to Modern Greek. The Ancient philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato spoke what is known as Classical Greek. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek which was the common language throughout the Greek and Roman empires. Koine (coin-ay) means "common." Although the words look the same to those who do not know any Greek, the grammatical differences between Classical, Koine and Modern are significant.



Modern Greek

\* ~- This is called an ending sigma because it is used when a sigma is the last letter of a word.

\*\* You may pronounce the zeta as "dz"