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## THE RISE OF THE GREEK EMPIRE AND THE SPREAD OF GREEK CULTURE.

- A. The Greeks. Greece began to emerge as a nation several centuries before the time of Alexander the Great but that part of the history is not essential to this study.
- B. "The very mention of the word Greek brings to mind some of the glorious achievements of this remarkable race. They excelled in almost every area of human activity. Ancient Athens was the intellectual center of pre-Christian history. Here all the arts flourished and reached the heights of attainment. The Greeks developed the most effective language the world has known. In philosophy, literature, sculpture, architecture and other liberal arts they made a contribution unequalled by any other people. They gave to the world such men as Thucydides, Aristophanes, Xenophon, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, Alexander, Demosthenes and many others. In the fourth century before Christ their culture was to be taken by zealous apostles far east into the Orient itself" (Hester 22).
- C. The Persians encounter the Greeks. The Persians continued to press westward until they reached the Aegean Sea, the Western boundary of Asia Minor. They crossed the sea to enter Europe (Greece) where they maintained a presence for a short time. The strong Greeks drove them out and eventually conquered the territory once held by Persia. Think what subsequent history might have been like if the Persians had been successful. Paul told the Greeks that God determined the appointed times and the boundaries of the nations (Acts 17:26).
- D. Philip of Macedon (King of Macedonia, 359—336 BC)
1. Philip laid the foundation of the Greek empire by uniting the Greek city states under a single ruler.
  2. Though not a Greek, strictly speaking, he wanted to lead a united Greece against Persia.
  3. He trained his son, Alexander, to carry out his ambitions.
- E. Alexander the Apostle of Hellenism (336—323 BC).
1. "Like most great leaders, Alexander represented a mass of conflicting strands. He was a Macedonian by nationality, and he dreamed of national glory as the heir of Philip. Culturally he was a Greek, educated by Aristotle himself. He carried the Iliad and the Odyssey with him on his campaigns" (Pfeiffer 67).
  2. Alexander, at the age of 13, was taught by Aristotle (343 BC). "Aristotle once said: 'The Greeks might govern the world, could they but combine into one political society.' Here is the genesis of Alexander's aim and method. This was the task Alexander set himself to accomplish, but the idea was Aristotle's, and to this day Aristotle rules the world" (Snaith 24).
  3. Alexander moves eastward.
    - a. Crossed the Hellespont and defeated the Persians at the Granicus river, thus opening the way to Asia Minor (334 BC). He passed through towns such as Sardis, Ephesus, Miletus and Tarsus.
    - b. The defeat of the Persians at Issus gave him the option to continue east or to move to the south to Phoenicia, Palestine and Egypt.
      - (1) Sidon surrendered to Alexander, but the island city of Tyre resisted. Alexander spent seven months in capturing the city. He built the now-famous causeway and thus fulfilled Biblical prophecy (Ezek. 26).
      - (2) "Tradition states that he spared the city of Jerusalem because Jaddua, the high priest, showed him out of the prophecy of Daniel (ch. 8) that he would conquer Persia. Whether this tradition is historically correct is difficult to determine, but it is a fact that Jerusalem was not destroyed even though other conquered cities were" (Gromacki 7).
      - (3) In Egypt he was welcomed as a deliverer and was recognized as a Pharaoh at Karnak. Typically, at Memphis he sacrificed to the gods. He saw the Pyramids, and established a

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great city which he named Alexandria (332 BC)- 'The new city of Alexandria was the enduring monument to the Macedonian conquest of Egypt" (Pfeiffer 69).

- (4) Retracing his steps through Palestine, he went through Syria and moved eastward beyond the Tigris river to defeat the "Grand Army" of Darius at the battle of Gaugamela (331 BC). He took the entire territory of Persia. 'The capitals of the Persian Empire — Babylon, Susa, Persepolis and Ecbatana — were successively occupied" (Pfeiffer 69).
  - (5) Upon the death of Darius in 330 BC, Alexander assumed the title of Basileus (Great King).
  - (6) He continued as far east as the Punjab region of India, but his army refused to follow him any further.
  - (7) In Persia he adopted Persian dress and ruled as an oriental despot (Contrast this with his Hellenic ideals!).
  - (8) His last headquarters was at Babylon. He had great plans to make Babylon the capital of a new commercial empire. (But, see the prophecy that Babylon was never to be inhabited, Isa. 13:20-22; Jer. 51:26). "None of it, however, was to be. Alexander died at Babylon in the grip of some sudden and mysterious disease in June of BC 323, after twelve years of rule and a mere thirty-two years of life" (Peters 54).
- F. A Mediterranean oikoumene. "The Greek dispersal of the years after BC 334 created the oikoumene, the 'known inhabited world,' not in the literal sense, to be sure, but as a kind of spiritual empire coterminous with Hellenism. The oikoumene was as far as the mind could reach, a Greek mind thinking Greek thoughts, elastic enough to recognize, salute and co-opt what lay outside its pale. It differed from the then forming Jewish Diaspora, which saw itself as a community in the form of a network within a larger alien body. ...The oikoumene was the creation of Alexander, not so much by intent as by what he did" (Peters 63).