

Alexander Changed the World at Arbela

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The Macedonian troops were used to victory against serious odds. Their brilliant young commander, Alexander, had already won battle after battle in Europe, Asia and Africa, often against numbers far superior to his own. A few years earlier they had left Macedonia and crossed into Asia, hoping for quick victories because they had almost no funds. Alexander's cavalry defeated the Persians on the banks of the Granicus River (in modern Turkey). Alexander and his Greek and Macedonian followers then turned south and took Tyre after a seven month siege.

Egypt yielded quickly, the Egyptians hailing Alexander as a deliverer. Alexander stopped long enough to found the city of Alexandria. Then he turned east to face the Persians once more.

Among his armies many must have doubted his success in the coming clash. The Persians had massed a force of over 250,000 men. Alexander had only forty seven thousand. Darius III, the Persian king, had even leveled and smoothed the plain of Arbela (Guagamela) for his chariots.

However skilled Alexander's army was, the sheer numbers of the enemy posed a threat. The Persians stood a good chance of getting their forces around the ends of the Greek army (that is, to *flank* it), which would allow the Persians to hit the Greeks both in front and behind. This would spell sure defeat for Alexander. Neither Alexander nor the Persians knew that centuries earlier (according to Biblical chronology) – even before Darius I became king, much less Darius III – a Jewish prophet named Daniel had foretold Alexander's success. Had the Persians known, they might have yielded without a fight and saved their lives rather than meet Alexander at Arbela in October 331 BC.

Daniel's prophecies foresaw the rise of the Greeks and their conquest of Persia. One prophecy said, "While I [Daniel] was observing, behold a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground...and he came up to the ram...and rushed at him in his mighty wrath...and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him..." The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the ram represented the Medes and Persians and the goat Greece.

Alexander saw the danger of the enemy lines that stretched beyond his. Something had to be done. For the first time as general, he broke off two reserve forces and placed one on each wing of his army to protect it against being flanked. He began the attack on his right.

The Persian numbers were so great that they came close to overwhelming the left and center of Alexander's line. But when the Persian cavalry massed against Alexander's right, leaving their own infantry uncovered in the center, Alexander led a charge that broke through. His men got behind the Persians and attacked them front and back. The Persians panicked and fled. At the loss of less than 500 of his own men, Alexander slaughtered over 40,000 Persians.

The victorious Greeks imposed their culture on the Mideast. Koine Greek became widely spoken and it was in this language that the gospel was preached and the New Testament written.

Bibliography:

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<https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/6000-1-bc/alexander-changed-the-world-at-arbela-11629549.html>