**GOD RULES IN THE KINGDOMS OF MEN**

Pop quiz. Category: History. Fill in the blanks.
1. Cyrus the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Persia (576-530 BC)
2. Ramses the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Egypt (1279-1213 BC)
3. Darius the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Persia (550-486 BC)
4. Alexander the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Macedon/Greece (356-323 BC)
5. Herod the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of Judea (36-4 BC)

I’ll stop there. But to this list could have been added Caesar *Augustus* (“Revered Ruler”) – Roman dictator; *Genghis* Khan (“Universal Lord”) – Mongolian conqueror; Catherine *the Great* – Russian empress; Frederick *the Great* – Prussian king; Peter *the Great* – Russian czar; and so many other rulers and conquerors who have gone down in history as “the Great.”

I love reading the Bible. I love reading world history books. But when the two are mixed together, well, as we used to say in Tennessee and Arkansas, I’m in hog heaven.

Such was the case of a historical book I finished yesterday. *The Virtues of War,* by Steven Pressfield, describes the rise, and fall, of Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king who took the trained army of his father, Philip of Macedon, and in just 12 years conquered the world. The Persian Empire had ruled for two centuries until the genius of Alexander conquered them in a series of three historic battles from 334 to 331 B.C.

Does history bore you? Be honest. Most folks yawn and roll their eyes when names and dates of battles are mentioned. “So what?” “Big deal.” “What’s for dinner?”

If you hate history, I get that. In school I hated all subjects except recess and lunch. Until I took a history course in the eighth grade. I was hooked. I’ve loved it ever since. Why? Biblically speaking, it deepens my love for the Bible, thus strengthening my faith in the God of the Bible. Let me illustrate what I mean by Alexander’s story.

Alexander, the 16 year old son of Philip of Macedon, had been educated at the feet of Aristotle, the famous Greek philosopher. He led his first cavalry charge and gained his first military victory in 336 B.C. For the next 16 years he would fight many great battles, always outnumbered by as much as 10 to 1. Yet, incredibly, he never lost a battle! He is considered by most historians as the greatest genius and tactician in military history. Not only was he a brilliant strategist, but he led every cavalry charge as the tip of the spear, always being the first man into battle. He suffered numerous wounds and battle scars, but almost miraculously was never killed. He died of an illness in Babylon in 323 B.C. at the age of 32, leaving behind no heir. His kingdom was divided into four parts.

What makes all of this so special? God foretold it, not once, but several times! Take a few minutes today and read Daniel 2, 8, 10, 11 and Zechariah 9:1-8. Alexander is in those prophecies, not by name but by references.

In Daniel 2 the prophet is interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and says in verse 39, *“But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth.”* That third kingdom of bronze? Alexander’s Greek Empire.

[Daniel 8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%208) is even more specific. The prophet has a vision of a ram with two horns (signifying Medo-Persia) attacked by a swiftly moving goat with a single large horn. After the goat kills the ram, its horn is broken “*at the height of his power*,” and four other horns grow up in its place ([Daniel 8:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%208.1-8)). The angel Gabriel explains the vision: the goat signifies Greece, and the prominent horn is “*the first king*” (Alexander). The breaking of the horn signifies the untimely death of the king, and the four smaller horns represent a divided kingdom. The prophecy came true in every detail: Alexander died in Babylon and his kingdom was divided among his four generals, Ptolemy, Seleucas, Lysimachus, and Cassander.

Daniel 11 refers specifically to the kingdom of Greece. Alexander, though not named, is called “*a mighty king . . . who will rule with great power and do as he pleases*” ([11:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan%2011.2-3)).

Zechariah 9:1-8 teaches us, without mentioning Alexander’s name, that God would destroy all the seacoast powers like Tyre and Sidon that had been thorns in the sides of God’s people for centuries. Alexander laid siege to Tyre, which had built its fortress out in the Mediterranean Sea and felt invincible from attack. Unbelievably Alexander built a land bridge out to the walls and conquered it, thus fulfilling prophecy.

Perhaps as equally impressive as Alexander’s military success was his advancement of Greek culture, called [Hellenism](https://www.gotquestions.org/Hellenism.html). In every city Alexander conquered he instituted schools to teach [Greek philosophy](https://www.gotquestions.org/Greek-philosophy-Christianity.html) and Koine Greek, which became the standard language of the known world. Because of Alexander it became the language of the New Testament. The world could now read the whole Bible (including the Old Testament – with the Hebrew now translated into Greek). Can we not see the hand of God in all of this?

Nebuchadnezzar, who called himself “The Great,” when he boasted, *“Is not this* ***great*** *Babylon, that* ***I*** *have built for a royal dwelling by* ***my******mighty power*** *and for the honor of* ***my******majesty****?”* (Dan. 4:30). It didn’t take long for him to find out that only God should be called “The Great.” Eating grass like an ox and looking more like a bird than a man, he gave up his title of “the Great” and said, “*I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth*” (4:34-35).

Herod “the Great” never learned the same hard lesson, dying an agonizing death after accepting the people’s worship by saying, “*the voice of a god, not of a man*” (Acts 12:22).

The take-away from the lives of all these “great” men is this, their lives are but pawns in God’s Almighty hands. He sets up kings and brings them down. He moves history in but one direction, and it is this:

*“God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that* ***Jesus Christ is Lord****, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil. 2:9-11).

Alexander, along with Cyrus, Ramses, Darius and Herod were called in their day “The Great.” But they, like Nebuchadnezzar, soon learned that only God rules in the kingdoms of men. Alexander, knowing he would soon die, said: “Bury my body and don’t build any monument. Keep my hands out so the people know the one who won the world had nothing in hand when he died.”

Dear brothers and sisters, on this earth we are but “*dust and ashes*” (Gen. 18:27), and all our righteousness are as “*filthy rags*” (Isa. 64:6). But one day, as we are being transported by the angels of God into the next world, we will learn that we are “*heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ*” in His glory (Rom. 8:17). We who have become as little children in this kingdom on earth will become “*greatest*” in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:4).

Until tomorrow … read history and rejoice in fulfilled prophecy.

I love you.

Rick