

Dr. Anthony J. Tomasino, Judaism, Session 5, Alexander the Great

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This is Dr. Anthony Tomasino in his teaching on Judaism before Jesus. This is session 5, Alexander the Great.

So, we've been talking about the struggles between Persia and Greece.

At this point in history, Persia has found itself unable to financially maintain the same kind of military presence that it had earlier. So, the days of Persia invading Greece are pretty much past. However, the Greeks have a long memory, and they are not forgiving.

And so what we find is that the Greeks are still looking for revenge. For the most part, they are unable to fulfill those ambitions because they're too busy fighting with each other and hating each other and all that kind of good stuff. Eventually, the Greeks are united under the rule of somebody who was, in a way, kind of unexpected because he really wasn't Greek at all.

I'm talking about a fellow by the name of Philip of Macedon. So, here's what happens when we're talking about Alexander the Great. You know, sometimes we wonder what was so great about some of these people when we talked about Cyrus and why Cyrus really kind of earned the title of the great Alexander.

Well, not so much as his personality or even his righteousness or goodness or anything of that sort that helped him to earn that title. For him, it really is his accomplishments, because there might not be any single figure in the history of the world who had so great an impact as did Alexander the Great. And the guy only, well, you know, outside of Jesus.

But anyway, the guy only lived to be 33 years old, which, you know, outside of Jesus, how many people have accomplished that much in such a short life? But under his administration, his campaigns, and so on, the center of the world really tilted. It had been in the East, it had been in the Middle East with the Babylonians and with the Persians, and now suddenly, the whole center of the world is going to shift to the West, and the Greeks are going to become prominent, and then the Romans. So, the world that we know today was largely created by Alexander the Great.

I mean, you can often say something like, if it hadn't been him, it would have been somebody else. But we really don't know, you know? So, in 10 years, he created the largest empire that the world had ever known up to that time. That's pretty impressive.

He encouraged the fusion of Western and Eastern ideas into a new cultural expression that we call Hellenism. And we're going to talk a little bit more about that in a minute or two here. So, let's back up a little and talk about where he came from.

Alexander's origins. I already mentioned his father, Philip. Alexander was from Macedonia.

Now, looky here. This is Macedonia. Greece, of course, is down here.

So, the Macedonians were considered by the Greeks to be something of barbarians. They were not as cultured as the Greeks were. But they were near neighbors and they were growing fairly powerful and they got involved in all the squabbles between the Greeks.

Eventually, they began to master some of this craft that they were learning from the Greeks—the craft of, well, not statesmanship so much as warcraft. He is the son of Philip.

Philip was the king of Macedon. He had been captured in one of these great skirmishes. While he was a prisoner of war, he studied the battle tactics of his conquerors.

He improved upon them. Using his newfound knowledge, he conquered several Greek city-states and united them into a single kingdom under the Macedonians. Well, the Greeks didn't like that very much because they didn't really like the Macedonians.

But they didn't have a whole lot of choice in the matter because the Macedonians had become strong at this point. There were rumors swirling about that Alexander, when he was born, was actually the son of Zeus. These rumors were not encouraged by Philip.

They were encouraged, however, probably by Alexander's mother, Olympia. She was rumored to be a witch who slept with snakes, and the idea was that she had been impregnated by Zeus in the form of a serpent.

And so that's why Alexander was not actually a simple mortal man but was far more than just mortal. Now, Philip wanted to have the best possible Greek-style education for his son. So, he hired a tutor for his boy, someone whose name you might recognize.

Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, was his tutor. Through his education, Alexander developed a love for Greek culture and, like all Greeks, came to see Greek culture as superior to all other cultures in the world.

This is a depiction of Alexander's mother, Olympia. Or Olympias, as you'll also see it written. And as I say, she was a very powerful and ambitious woman, as many of the ladies at that time were.

You almost get the feeling at times that Philip was afraid of her, and maybe for good reason. Philip, Alexander's father, was a powerful man, a physically imposing person, and a very capable warrior. So Alexander became king in 336 after Philip was assassinated.

The rumors are that he was assassinated by people hired by his wife, Olympias, who wanted her son, of course, to become king. Alexander was 20 years old when he became king of the Greek Empire. Immediately, of course, the Greek city-states decided to test his mettle.

Several of them rebelled, most notably the city of Thebes. At this point, Alexander felt that it was essential that he show force and strength.

So he squelched a number of rebellions, first to the north. But his ruthlessness against the people of Thebes has become somewhat legendary. When his forces took Thebes, they destroyed the city, burned its buildings, and killed its people.

Men, women, and children were massacred. And the fear of Alexander spread throughout the other Greek city-states. And many quickly fell in line and acknowledged him as their leader.

So, now Alexander goes about the business of expanding his empire. Philip's ambition already had been to invade Persia. He had these ideas in mind.

Remember that Persia had at one time conquered Macedon, Macedonia. And, as I mentioned already, the Macedonians hadn't forgotten that. They had the pretense of invasion on the fact that they had these Greek colonies along Asia Minor, which were being dominated by the Persians.

And so, the idea was that it would be a noble crusade for the Greek forces to cross over and to liberate those Greek colonies, so that the Greek people could be free to be Greeks. Well, in 334 BC, Alexander amassed an army of 40,000 troops. And he crossed the Dardanelles into Asia.

Now, his initial goal, as we said, was simply to liberate some Greek colonies and then probably go back and come back with a bigger force or something like that. But what

happened was, when he marched into Asia Minor, he encountered practically no resistance. And this must have been a surprise to Alexander.

It demonstrates to some extent just how incompetent the rulers of Persia had become by this point. Because everybody knew that Alexander was going to invade. It was not a huge secret.

Yet, they had done nothing to fortify that frontier. Alexander and his troops were certainly encouraged by the fact that this seemed like it was going to be a bit of a cakewalk. So they liberated the Greek colonies and then began their march through Asia Minor.

One of the early stops along this trek was in the place called Gordium in Phrygia, which is right smack in the center of Asia Minor. Now, here, there's a long legend regarding the Gordian knot. And the idea was, and there are several different versions of this story, but basically the idea was that there was this huge, unbreakable knot that tied together like an ox yoke.

The legend that the people of Gordium told was that it had been prophesied that whoever could untie that knot would become the ruler of the world. Well, Alexander took a look at the knot, plucked at it a little bit here, plucked at it a little bit there. Then, he drew out his sword and cut the knot in half.

Cutting the Gordian knot, as we say, which is kind of seemed a little unfair and a little bit less than kosher. But, hey, you know, it worked. And everybody viewed this as a portent of Alexander's coming conquests.

So, defeating Darius III. The first time that Alexander's forces actually encountered a large group of Persian soldiers happened at Granicus. In this case, again, the numbers are almost certainly exaggerated by the Greek sources because, you know, they want them to sound incredibly remarkable, superhuman victories.

But there can be no doubt that the forces that Alexander faced were much larger than his own army of 40,000. And they won an easy victory at Granicus. And according to the records that the Greeks preserved, his army lost only 110 men in the skirmish.

So, this was like the first major sort of conflict. The Battle of Issus was the first time that Alexander met an army which was led by King Darius himself. Once again, the Greeks won an easy victory and Darius III was forced to flee.

He had to leave personally. He abandoned his wife and his children. Alexander took them in and treated them as honored guests, much to his credit.

This brings us back to the question of how Alexander's relatively small army was able to take on these much larger Persian forces. We already talked a little bit about the superiority of the armor, but there's also the superiority of the type of troops we're talking about here.

The Greek troops were hardened battle veterans. They had been fighting against each other because all the Greek city-states were constantly at war against each other. People like the Spartans are famous for being trained from youth, from infancy, to become warriors.

But they weren't the only ones. The Athenians, the Thebans, the Ionians, all these various city-states in Greece were constantly drilling and training so that the youth could grow up to become soldiers who could fight against the other city-states and assert their superiority. So, here we have these trained and well-armed Greek soldiers versus the armies of the Persians, which consisted of people drawn from all various regions around the Persian Empire.

Many of them are probably not very well-trained. They're doing it for the money, you know. Some of the soldiers in that army, the Persian army, were probably Greeks themselves.

And so, when the battles got tough, the Persian forces got running. They didn't feel it worth their lives to defend, particularly the emperors in this later phase, who were considered to be pretty incompetent and corrupt. That was one of the major reasons why the armies were so unbalanced.

Another reason, of course, I mentioned already, is the superior armor, but also the superior technique. This has to do with the development of a battle tactic called the phalanx. Now, the way the phalanx worked, here's a picture, a kind of an illustration of a phalanx, is the Greek soldiers, the front lines, were armed and equipped with a large shield, and these shields could be linked together, and then the spears could be extended through the holes in the shields.

Now, interesting, the Persian armies depended upon their cavalry, you know, they were the great horsemen, and also upon bow and arrows, and they used a lot of light arrows. Some people have remarked it must have been very impressive to see this shower of arrows coming from the Persian armies and falling into the Greek soldiers. But with the phalanx formations, the Greeks could just lift up their shields and form this wall that pretty much was impenetrable.

So, the main tactic that was used by the Persians was fairly ineffective against this Greek phalanx. One more thing that needs to be mentioned here is Alexander's propaganda. Alexander was a student of the tactics of Cyrus the Great, and he did not at all shy away from painting the current Persian kingship, the administration, as

being incompetent and viewing himself as being the one who could bring enlightenment and order back to the Persian Empire.

He also used a few scare tactics, and one of the things that he did, which was kind of clever, is he had these supersized horse's bits forged, much larger than a normal horse would ever use as a bit, and after a battle, he would leave them lying around on the battlefield. Well, the rumors spread that Alexander the Great had supersized horses. How can we possibly stand against people who have these giant horses? So this is the kind of thing that Alexander excelled at, and this and other sorts of ruses that he used to make people fear him and want to surrender rather than fight.

So, after Alexander goes through and liberates Asia Minor, he starts down the coast of the Middle East and heads into the region of Phoenicia and he comes to the ancient city of Tyre. Now, Tyre is an interesting city in the way that they had it built in those days. From the Old Testament, Tyre was never very popular with the people of Israel or Judah because of the fact that they were the great slave traders of the ancient world.

But, 332 is when Alexander arrived at Tyre. Now, the way that Tyre is built, there's a main city here on the shoreline and then there's an island about half a mile off of the shore. And the island was heavily, heavily fortified.

Before a siege, the people of Tyre would move many of their people, their most important people, and so on, over into the island fortress area. They could hold out there for a very, very long time. They had a very famous navy, one of the most powerful and able navies of the Middle East.

And they also could basically continue to supply their people within that area there for many, many, well, for a very long time. In fact, King Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre for; I believe it was 13 years before finally, the two of them decided that they'd had enough, and Nebuchadnezzar went away. And if Nebuchadnezzar couldn't take the city of Tyre, then what is Alexander the Great going to do? Well, Alexander initially tried doing the usual sort of things of trying to send barges over but the people of Tyre set the barges on fire.

He tried to launch missiles at the island but they couldn't reach. So, eventually Alexander builds a, well, we call it a bridge, all the way out to the island. Not completely out to the island, but close enough to the island that he could bring his war engines and his trebuchets and other tools into play.

Then they began to batter the city. As I say, it took them about seven months to finally break through and take control of Tyre. And when he had won his victory, well, he tried to negotiate for peace first.

So, let's give him credit for that. He sent some emissaries to Tyre and the people of Tyre killed his emissaries and dropped them over the wall. This did not make Alexander happy.

And so, when he finally actually breached the walls of the city, he massacred the men inside. The women and children were sold into slavery. And you have to imagine that there were some people in Judah who were looking on at this and saying, they had it coming, as it had been predicted by the prophets, that this would be the end of Tyre.

So, after taking Tyre, he proceeded down the coast and came to Gaza. Gaza also resisted. It took him two months to take Gaza.

So, now he has control of pretty much the Near East. In 332 we can say that Alexander is pretty much the king now of the Near East. Darius III is kind of in hiding and not really running the empire anymore.

And Alexander is going to kind of take his time from this point forward. So, he proceeds down toward Egypt. Now, here we have a legend that arises.

Josephus tells this legend, and it appears in a different form in the rabbis, but essentially, what the legend says is that on his way to Egypt, Alexander decided to make a pit stop in Jerusalem. As he heads toward Jerusalem, the people in Jerusalem are fearful of what's going to happen, but the high priest in Jerusalem has a dream. And in this dream, he had seen Alexander coming, and he had been told to go out and meet him because God had designated this man to become the ruler of the world.

And so, as Alexander approached Jerusalem, out comes the high priest. When Alexander sees the high priest, he fell down on his knees before the high priest because he himself had had a dream where he had seen this man and had seen the name of the Lord, the Tetragrammaton, Yahweh, emblazoned on the man's headdress and seeing that name, he realized that this was a representative of the greatest and highest God and so he did him honor. Very likely, it didn't happen.

Very likely it did not because there's really no evidence that Alexander had the time nor even the inclination to actually divert his march toward Jerusalem at that time. What he did do is he went down to Egypt and when he arrived at Egypt, he was hailed there as a new pharaoh. And this is kind of an interesting story because Alexander now wants to show himself as being a true friend of the Egyptians.

And among his stops, he goes to see the Apis Bull. This is one of the mummies of an Apis Bull. Now, remember the story of Cambyses about how it was said that

Cambyses had killed the Apis Bull in an act of impiety? Well, Alexander goes, and he worships the Apis Bull.

And so, the people say, Oh, what a guy, this Alexander, you know, what a fellow he is, a man of piety. And they declared him to be the son of Amun-Ra. So he becomes the pharaoh of Egypt.

He worships the Apis Bull. And it seems that this is probably about the time that Alexander's vision for the conquest of the East is beginning to change. Because he had set out into the East with this understanding that Greek culture was, as we say, the bee's knees.

You know, there is nothing superior to Greek culture. And so he was going to impose Greek culture upon these pitiful barbarians of the East. But at this point, he's starting to think that maybe there's a better way.

Maybe we can bring together the two worlds. And it probably kind of shocked his soldiers to see Alexander dressed in the garb of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh. But for him, he was feeling, almost it seems like he was coming into his own.

He realized he had a bigger mission than simple conquest. His mission became more like that of a missionary or even a visionary, we might say.

Of somebody who could bring together the world into a fusion that would be greater than its parts. So, after Alexander takes Egypt, spends some time there for a while, he has to deal with a revolt in Samaria. Now, this is something which is going to become very significant later on.

The Samaritans are a race of people that, according to the Bible, were drawn from various lands. Now, the way the Bible tells this story is after the Assyrians had deported the people of Israel in 721 B.C., that they resettled and repopulated the land with people from various places around the empire. The Assyrian empire.

These people came and worshipped their own pagan gods. Well, according to the Book of Kings, lions would come out of the wilderness and tear these people up while they were worshipping their pagan gods. So, they said, what's going on here? And a prophet told them, well, the problem is you're not worshipping the god of this land.

You need to worship the god of this land. And so, the Samaritans, as it came to be called, the Samaritans sent envoys down to Judah and said, you need to teach us about the god of this land. And so, the people of Judah sent priests up to Samaria who taught them the ways of the Lord.

And they set up their own temple there and established their own nation again. And now they're worshipping the Lord in a form of Yahwism that to the Jews always seemed suspect. Now why? Well, back in the Old Testament, it tells us it was because they still worshipped their pagan gods too.

By the time of Jesus, that's not the case anymore. By the time of Jesus, these people had pretty much put away any hints of paganism. But the problem was they regarded the temple in Jerusalem to be the wrong temple.

Their temple was the right temple, the one on Mount Gerizim. The temple in Jerusalem was the wrong temple. And if you didn't believe in the sanctity of Jerusalem, you couldn't be a good Jew.

That was one of the non-negotiables and I'm going to talk about that later. At any rate, so there were these tensions between the people of Judah, the Judahites, and the people of Samaria. They worshipped the same god but they've got these different shrines.

Now, Samaria, the city, this had been the capital city of the old empire or kingdom of Israel, the city of Samaria revolts and kills the oops, let's wait there for a minute, kills the governor that Alexander had placed over Samaria. Well, Alexander then proceeded to Samaria with his armies and raised the city to the ground. Very likely he had the aid of the Jews to do this.

The anger and antipathy that had been boiling between the Jews and the Samaritans kind of bubbled to the surface again, and of course, this didn't help the relations between the two parties in the least. After having demolished Samaria many of the people escaped to Mount Gerizim and to that region there and around Shechem and so on, and Alexander, in order to mollify them, gave them money and helped them to rebuild, and so Samaria on the other hand, interestingly enough, was repopulated with Greeks so in this era Samaria was no longer a Samaritan city it had now become a Greek city. So, Persepolis, of course, is like the big goal that Alexander has to undertake.

If he's going to conquer Persia he's got to go to Persia. He hasn't been there yet and so he begins his march up toward Persia. At the Battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC, Alexander's forces again entered Mesopotamia, and this kind of frees the way the path for Alexander to enter into Persia itself.

Alexander is declared the King of Persia. Darius' royal city and his palace were burned to the ground we're told in some of our sources that after the well when he saw the palace in flames Alexander had a change of heart, and he tried to put out the palace was destroyed. So Darius escaped once again, and Alexander went in pursuit.

When it seemed that it was inevitable that Alexander was going to overtake Darius, one of Darius' officers assassinated the king, and he proclaimed himself then to be the King of Persia. That didn't last very long because Alexander captured and executed him in 336 BC. Nothing like putting a target on your back, right? So, with all these conquests, Alexander now has the task of trying to unite his empire. So after he secured the northern parts of the Persian Empire, Alexander met the daughter of one of these satraps up here in the north and immediately fell in love with her.

Her name was Roxana. Her beauty is legendary. The most beautiful woman that ever lived, of course.

But Alexander married her. He went to Babylon, where he kind of set up his headquarters, and Alexander was planning to make Babylon the center of his new kingdom, which is interesting Babylon rather than Susa or any of the Persian cities, but probably the climate was better for one thing. But there also had been a kind of superstitious awe about Babylon throughout basically the entire ancient world.

Back in the days, even in the earliest days of the squabbles between the Sumerians and the Babylonians, the Akkadians and the Assyrians later on, there was a reluctance to attack Babylon because Babylon means the gate of the gods, and it was considered to be the place where the gods came to earth. So, it was in a sense would have been a fitting place for Alexander's empire to be established. As a strictly political move, he also married one of Darius III's daughters.

One woman. One woman only. They did not have multiple wives.

Polygamy was not a Greek thing. Part of the reason for this was because why would you have multiple wives? Well, you'd have multiple wives, so you could have lots and lots of kids. In Greek culture, people were obsessed with having small families.

So, polygamy never caught on in Greece. On the other hand adultery was a big thing. So, the daughter of Darius III and again this would have really raised the eyebrows of a lot of his Greek troops like good Evans what do you think you are some kind of sheik or something? This is to legitimize his rule over the empire because you know that one of the ways that you establish your legitimacy is by marriage alliances.

As Roxanna proved to be quite the shrew herself and later assassinated the other wife. So, to further unite the kingdom, Alexander retained native rulers wherever he could, very much following the example of Cyrus the Great. He again annoyed his own officers because, for their understanding, when you conquer somebody, you take leadership over them, you become the boss.

You don't leave the native leaders in control of things. You certainly take a lot of spoil. And Alexander was very stingy about the amount of despoilation he allowed his troops to do.

So, he was trying to win them over. He was trying to be, in a sense, the savior of the peoples of the East. And trying to get people to buy into this vision of his, of this united world culture.

Well, Alexander's ambition eventually kind of outpaced his soldiers' patience. And when he decided to march into India, it seemed like he had maybe gone a bridge too far. In the spring of 327 BC, Alexander and his army marched into India.

Once again, we find that Alexander, the Indian elephant here, the war elephant, was extremely impressed by war elephants. He thought they were remarkable. He gave pet names to some of these creatures, which he found particularly impressive.

But at any rate, as they're traveling through India, some interesting rumors are spreading among the Indian peoples. For the most part, he didn't get any resistance here either because there were legends among the Greeks of Hercules passing through those same regions.

Alexander was beginning to portray himself as the reincarnation of Hercules, which was also leading to some friction among his troops. Now, again, he's leaving the local rulers to govern in his name.

Alexander eventually found that his troops would go no further. And we're told that he cajoled them, he yelled at them, he went in his tent and he sulked. There's the old saying of Alexander weeping when he finds there are no more worlds to conquer.

Well, it wasn't that there was no more world to conquer. It's just that his troops had reached the end of their line. And so eventually Alexander had to agree to go back home and let his troops rest and enjoy the spoils of victory. So, there are some troubles in the ranks.

The stinginess about letting the soldiers take plunder was a source of tension. Because, you know, that's what you do. That's how you get rich, by doing campaigns.

Alexander's soldiers were not getting rich, and they resented that. The Macedonian armies began to despise the fact that Alexander was beginning to take on the heirs of a Persian lord because, you know, the Greeks were a pretty austere people.

The kings of the Greeks were warriors. They didn't have huge harems. They didn't have perfume.

They didn't have all these things that accompanied the ruling of the East. And so, the soldiers resented the fact that their warrior king was turning into a sissy, in a sense. Then, there was the whole question of Alexander's divinity.

This became a matter of serious conflict, even leading to Alexander killing one of his good friends over a conflict regarding it. Now, this all began well before Alexander entered the East.

This is something that I see even today when I read some more popular textbooks. A lot of times, they say that Alexander copied the Persians, became deified, and was treated like a god. Actually, that's not the case.

The Persian kings were not treated as gods. In fact, Alexander's father, Philip, was already worshipped as a god in Greece. And in Macedonia.

There was quite the cult of Philip around the realm. The Greeks did not at all unusual worship dead kings, but they did not unusually worship a live king.

But we have these wonderful accounts of some of the dialogues from some of the Greek writers. Of how Alexander would sort of put up some of his men to sing his praises. And comparing his acts to the acts of other great kings and gods of the past.

And, in particular, this comparison to Hercules became one of their selling points. So, an oracle of Amun-Ra in Egypt had proclaimed already that he was the divine son of Amun-Ra. And so Amun-Ra being the chief of the gods, you know, that's the equivalent of Zeus to the Greeks.

And so the idea that Alexander was a demigod was well implanted in his own mind. And in probably the minds of some of his men, though most of the Greeks didn't see it apparently. As his Greek soldiers, they saw that some of his soldiers were beginning to suggest that he should be recognized as Hercules incarnate.

And, again, there's this wonderful dialogue where one of his soldiers is saying, Which of Hercules' deeds has Alexander not copied and, in fact, even surpassed? Now, if you leave out the whole superhuman strength thing, maybe you can make that argument. But what they're trying to say is that this man had managed to do all the things that any of the gods could do. So why should he not be worshipped as a god? And, of course, not only many of Alexander's soldiers but really even among many of the people of the Near East, this would seem to be taking it too far.

So, during his campaign in India, I say he's hailed as a reincarnation of Hercules. He got into a fight with one of his men over this, and both of them were drunk at the time. And Alexander killed the soldier who had been one of his trusted friends.

And this plunged Alexander into depression. The guy was prone to a lot of depression, by the way. And for some reason, he seemed to think that the way to cure depression was to get drunk, which never really works.

So, his troops say, we've gone far enough, let's go back home. So, he returns to Persia. There, Alexander executed Macedonian officials who had been left behind and left in charge of things.

He found that a number of them had been abusing their power, so he put them all to death. He also found that some of them had been vandalizing the tomb of Cyrus the Great. And they paid for that with their lives as well.

He appointed Persian nobles to positions of leadership, both in his own army and in the government. Part of the reason for doing this was because his own soldiers were rebelling against his leadership. And so, when he deposed some of his officers and put Persians in charge instead, they came back chagrined with their tails between their legs.

Please forgive us, Alexander, it won't happen again. And so, he restored many of his Macedonian officers as well. But they began to share power and had to share power with these Persian officers.

We already talked about how he had married Darius III's daughter. But he also held a mass wedding at Persia. 80 of his most noble officers and 10,000 of his soldiers were married to Persian women in this great mass symbolism of the union of East and West.

Now, I have to go on to say that most of those marriages did not survive Alexander's death. Many of them were dissolved within a year. But at this point, Alexander gave handsome gifts to anybody who would participate in this wedding.

And so many of his soldiers took on these wives. And this, Alexander viewed as kind of like the crowning achievement of his campaign so far, showing to the world just what he intended to do to make this fusion of the Greek culture with the Persian culture. He managed to find 20 cities bearing the name Alexander, which could be confusing to some.

But the major one that we all remember is the one in Egypt, Alexandria, which became really the home of culture and philosophy in the East. So, let's go a little bit further down here. So a little bit after the return to Persia, Alexander's best friend Hephaestion died of a fever.

This once again plunged Alexander into depression, and once again into a drinking binge, which he pulled himself out of his funk, you might say, by going forth on more

campaigns, taking his armies out, and venting his rage upon some of the cities that they conquered at this point. You have to wonder if maybe some of his soldiers weren't thinking at this point. Now we've got the old Alexander back. After the death of his friend, after this brief conquest here, Alexander returned back home to Babylon.

His next campaign he planned in Babylon, but he didn't live to carry it out. It seemed rather that something happened, and it's been speculated a lot about what exactly it was. Some people think it might have been the drinking, that the drinking binge caused him to poison himself, which certainly is possible.

It might have been an assassination. We don't know. But for some reason, Alexander died in 323, 33 years of age, and seemed to be in the prime of life, and yet, not a total surprise, he had been sick on a couple of other occasions, and yet this time it seemed obvious it took his life.

Plutarch, the historian, records that Alexander had been plagued by a number of bad omens that predicted that he was going to die, but again, we have to take these things with a grain of salt. Plutarch lived quite a while after the days of Alexander. Was his wine poisoned? That's a possibility as well.

But Alexander's body was preserved in honey, and then he was laid to rest in Alexandria, taken in procession from Babylon down to Alexandria, where his tomb, well, actually remained for several centuries, and nobody knows what happened to it, interestingly enough. It is gone, but we know that it was still there in like 300 AD, so we aren't really sure when or where it was destroyed or by whom. So, Alexander's empire was certainly the largest the world had ever seen.

It went all the way through Greece, Macedonia, Asia Minor, all the way across the old Persian holdings, down into Egypt, and even further into India, portions of India that he had managed to conquer. But yes, once they got to the Indus, that's where his troops said, nope, we're not crossing that river, we're done. And so that's when they had backed off, but much larger than any empire that had ever been in the past.

So, what happened after Alexander's death? Well, Alexander had left his wife, Roxanna, pregnant. It was assumed that if she had a son, her son would then take over Alexander's kingdom when he came of age. Until then, Alexander's highest of his generals, a fellow by the name of Perdiccas, was elected by his generals as the high regent, not only to administer the empire until the son came of age, but also to oversee the child's growth and education.

The various generals decided to divide up the conquered realms among themselves, but none of them seemed to have been particularly pleased with the regions that they had. And so, these generals began to fight among themselves to increase their

own holdings. These people became known as the Diadochi, which means successors.

And the Diadochi are going to continue to play a very big role in the lives of the Jews in the years to come. So, almost immediately, we see these generals reverse Alexander's policy of leniency and immediately begin to exploit the native populations. This was particularly true of General Ptolemy in Egypt, who pretty much treated the Egyptian land as, as some people have said, a money-making factory.

Egypt was a remarkably fertile land. We don't usually think of Egypt in those ways, but really, in the days of the Roman Empire, it was considered the breadbasket of the Mediterranean. So, an ambitious person like Ptolemy could see that there was much money to be made from ruling this land and ruling it with an iron fist, which was what he proceeded to do.

Perdiccas was assassinated in 321 BC. And once Perdiccas was out of the way, the one restraining factor was the guy who seemed to have a level head and was trying to keep everybody in line. Well, they kind of went crazy. They began to carve up the empire into their own realms of authority, their own nations and states.

So, in 315 BC, we see the Diadochi have managed to carve out some large regions of their own. Ptolemy has Egypt down here. A general named Antigonus, Antigonus the One-Eye, as he was called.

So, he had Asia Minor and also was over much of Palestine. Seleucus, he got the old Persian Empire and Babylon in that region. Cassander, another general, got the regions in Greece.

Lysimachus had the regions of Macedonia. So, these generals are going to be constantly fighting with one another, constantly jockeying for position, and these borderlines are going to be redrawn rapidly throughout this period. There are a lot of names to try to straighten out and a lot of people to remember.

We're not going to bother trying to do that because, really, only two of them are going to matter to us in the end, and that will be Seleucus and Ptolemy from satraps to kings. So, Roxana and Alexander's son had taken refuge in Greece.

He went over to where Cassander was the ruler there. Cassander killed them in 310 B.C. So, now Alexander had, well, he had a brother who was somewhat mentally challenged, and so nobody really took him seriously as a threat for the throne. But at this point, pretty much the generals put away any pretense of saving the empire for Alexander's son.

Each one of them was going to take his own share and get as much of it as he could. 306 B.C., Antigonus declared himself king. Now, this is the first time Alexander died in 323, so we've got almost a couple of decades here before one of these guys takes it upon himself to claim the title of king.

The other generals very soon proclaimed themselves kings as well. Now, Antigonus, he was killed in 302 B.C. His territories then get divided among Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy. Keep it going.

Eventually, Seleucus ended up ruling Mesopotamia and Syria. Ptolemy takes Egypt, and he also takes control of Palestine. So, this is kind of the mess that we've got and is going to continue to be a mess, really, for the next couple hundred years.

There is going to be this constant tension, constant friction between these various powers, these various kings now who are vying for the place of primacy in the Middle East and each one of them wants to become the true heir of Alexander's empire. The thing is, none of them were up to the task. None of them were the man Alexander was, but in their ways, particularly Seleucus and Ptolemy, they were competent.

Competent was probably enough at this point to maintain their own little realms.

This is Dr. Anthony Tomasino in his teaching on Judaism before Jesus. This is session 5, Alexander the Great.