

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 23, Persians to Greeks Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 23, Persians to Greeks, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Donald Fowler's lecture on Old Testament Backgrounds explores the conflicts between the Persian and Greek empires. **The lecture focuses on the reigns of Darius and Xerxes**, highlighting Darius's administrative and economic innovations and Xerxes's wars against the Greeks, culminating in the pivotal Battle of Salamis. **The narrative then transitions to Alexander the Great's conquests**, emphasizing his military genius and logistical brilliance in defeating the weakened Persian Empire. **Finally, the lecture connects Alexander's Hellenistic influence** to lasting tensions between East and West, continuing to impact the region to this day.

2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 23 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Old Testament Introduction → Old Testament Backgrounds).



**Fowler_OTB_Session
n23.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 23, Persians to Greeks

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. Fowler's lecture on Persian and Greek conflicts and the end of the Persian Empire:

Briefing Document: Persian and Greek Conflicts & the End of Persia

Overview:

This lecture by Dr. Donald Fowler explores the pivotal conflicts between the Persian Empire and the Greek city-states, emphasizing their significance beyond the immediate region and their long-lasting impact on the trajectory of Western civilization. It highlights the administrative genius of Darius I, the military campaigns of Xerxes, and the eventual triumph of Alexander the Great, which marked the end of Persian dominance and ushered in the Hellenistic era. The lecture also underscores the enduring tensions between East and West, tracing their roots back to these ancient conflicts.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. **Significance Beyond Israel:** While the events discussed occurred far beyond the borders of Israel, these conflicts were critical in shaping the world, affecting the geopolitical landscape and cultural influences in ways the Israelites couldn't have fully grasped. Dr. Fowler states, "These wars between the Greeks and the Persians were going to determine which direction civilization went, and it turned out it would go west."
2. **Darius I: The Administrative Genius:** Despite being portrayed negatively in classical sources, Darius I is presented as a highly capable and innovative ruler. He established a sophisticated administrative system for the Persian satrapies, including checks and balances, that would continue to be used by subsequent Persian kings. He is credited with establishing a royal tax collector, which "meant revenue on a scale unlike which the world had ever seen." He also created a massive road system, a trunk road from Susa to Sardis, and popularized coinage, with the gold "daric" and silver "siglos". He was described as being "a little bit like Tiglath-Pileser in the sense that this administrative system will serve the empire for the remainder of its existence."
3. **Xerxes and the Greek Wars:** Xerxes, also known as Ahasuerus in the Bible, faced numerous revolts upon his ascension. He suppressed these rebellions, notably razing the walls of Babylon. His invasion of Greece, though portrayed in dramatic

fashion by the Greeks (with exaggerated troop counts), was a genuine threat. The Greeks' defense included the heroic stand at Thermopylae, which, while a defeat, provided time for the Greek fleet to regroup. The crucial naval Battle of Salamis, where the Greek ships were able to outmaneuver the larger Persian fleet, is identified as the key turning point. Dr. Fowler notes, "One of the things that someone like me finds just comical is that Marathon gets all the ink, but the real battle that saved the West was Salamis." The defeat of Persian forces at Salamis and other subsequent battles marked the end of their attempt to conquer Greece.

4. **The Aftermath of the Persian Wars:** The Persian Empire was not destroyed immediately after the defeat in Greece, but was weakened significantly. It was "Persian gold against Greek disunity" with the Persians exploiting Greek infighting. Eventually, this set the stage for the rise of Alexander the Great. The Persians signed the Peace of Callais with the Greeks, which gave the Greeks favorable terms showing that the Persians had lost the wars against the Greeks.
5. **Alexander the Great: The Conqueror and Apostle of Hellenism:** Alexander inherited his father's idea of a war against the Persians. He led the Macedonian army to significant victories at Granicus River, Issus, and Gaugamela, effectively ending the Persian Empire. "After Gaugamela, the Persian king is assassinated by his own troops, and the path is open for Alexander to make his way to the historic domain of Cyrus the Great." Beyond conquest, Alexander was an "apostle of Hellenism", seeking to spread Greek culture through the establishment of new cities, and also sought to give the world a common language, koine Greek. While he did not fully achieve his cultural goals, his actions and conquests greatly influenced the world and would be adopted into the culture of the Roman empire.
6. **Logistical Genius:** Alexander's military success was not just due to the strength of his troops but his mastery of logistics. He used the navy to provision and support his armies across vast distances, and even put his ships on rollers to move them across land. This gave him a significant advantage against his opponents.
7. **The Enduring Conflict Between East and West:** The lecture concludes by highlighting the long-lasting consequences of the conflicts between the Greeks and Persians. Alexander's attempt to Hellenize the East was only partially successful, resulting in tension that continued into the Roman era and beyond. Dr. Fowler states, "It's ironic that tension between East and West has continued today between the successor states to the ancient Middle Eastern kingdoms, as

evidenced in the Islamic world." The fundamental East-West divide continues to shape geopolitics today.

8. **Alexander as a "Hinge Person":** While Alexander the Great's life and impact fall within the New Testament period, he serves as a bridge between the Old Testament world and the Hellenized world of the New Testament. He fundamentally altered the political and cultural landscape of the region. "He's the hinge from the Old Testament to the New Testament, from the Middle Eastern to the Hellenized world."

Conclusion:

Dr. Fowler's lecture provides a compelling overview of a critical period in history, emphasizing not only the military conflicts but also the administrative and cultural impacts. The lecture reveals the importance of understanding the historical background of the Old Testament and its connection to later events, demonstrating how these ancient struggles continue to reverberate even in the modern world. The lecture closes with a call to continue learning more about the world of the Bible, reminding the audience that we'll never know all there is to know but that the journey is worth it.

4. Study Guide: Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 23, Persians to Greeks

Persian and Greek Conflicts and the End of Persia: A Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each:

1. What was Darius I's significant contribution to the administration of the Persian Empire?
2. Describe the purpose and structure of the Royal Road.
3. What was the significance of the derrick and the siglos?
4. What actions did Xerxes take upon accession to the throne regarding Babylon?
5. What is the historical and religious significance of Xerxes in the Bible?
6. What was the significance of the battle at Thermopylae for the Greeks?
7. Why was the Battle of Salamis more decisive than the Battle of Marathon?
8. Explain the strategic error made by the Persian fleet at Salamis and its impact.
9. How did the Greeks exploit Persian weaknesses after their major defeats?
10. What was Alexander the Great's approach to conquest and culture, and what was its long-term impact?

Quiz Answer Key

1. Darius I created a system of satrapies (provinces) with checks and balances, ensuring no single satrap could challenge the throne. He also created a royal tax collector, centralizing revenue collection for the empire. This administrative structure was foundational for the Persian Empire's stability.
2. The Royal Road was an extensive 1,600-mile paved road that connected Susa to Sardis, serving as a vital artery for the Persian Empire. It had 111 stations with soldiers and horses, facilitating communication, troop movement, and trade across the vast empire.
3. The derrick was a gold coin named after Darius, and the siglos was a silver coin. These coins standardized currency for the first time, replacing foodstuffs or weighed metal, greatly impacting trade and economics.

4. Xerxes quelled a revolt in Babylon, reduced it to a satrapy, razed its walls, destroyed its temples, and melted down the statue of Baal. He also removed the title “King of Babylon” from his own royal titles, diminishing its importance.
5. Xerxes, known as Ahasuerus in the book of Ezra, is a significant biblical figure. His actions in both biblical and non-biblical contexts demonstrate a complex relationship between the Persian Empire and the Jewish people.
6. At Thermopylae, a small group of Spartans and other Greeks bravely held a narrow pass against a much larger Persian army, providing time for the Athenians to evacuate. Although the Greek forces were annihilated, the battle bought valuable time for the rest of the Greek forces.
7. The Battle of Salamis was more decisive because it resulted in the crippling of the Persian fleet. This loss of naval power forced the Persians to withdraw due to inability to supply their land forces and ultimately saved Greece from Persian domination, unlike the battle at Marathon which was only a minor loss for the Persians.
8. The Persian fleet made a strategic error by entering the narrow waters of Salamis, where they could not fully utilize their size advantage and maneuverability. The smaller Greek ships outmaneuvered the Persian fleet, ultimately leading to the defeat of the Persian navy.
9. The Greeks exploited Persian weakness by capitalizing on infighting and disunity within the empire. The Persians, weakened by previous battles and internal problems, were vulnerable to Greek counterattacks and manipulation through gold and political intrigue.
10. Alexander the Great sought not only military conquest but also to spread Hellenistic culture through establishing Greek cities and promoting the common language of Koine Greek. His cultural efforts were lasting, leaving a profound influence on the Eastern world, despite not having complete success.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the administrative innovations of Darius I and their impact on the Persian Empire, comparing and contrasting them with earlier empires in the region.
2. Evaluate the significance of the battles at Thermopylae and Salamis in the context of the Persian Wars, and discuss the role of Greek and Persian strategies in shaping the outcome.
3. Describe the evolution of Persian-Greek relations from the time of Darius to the Peace of Callias, and examine the factors contributing to the eventual decline of Persian influence in the region.
4. Assess Alexander the Great's role as a military leader and cultural disseminator, and discuss his strategic methods and long-term impact on both the East and the West.
5. Discuss the legacy of the East-West conflict described in the lecture, tracing its historical roots in the Persian and Greek periods to its continuing relevance in contemporary global relations.

Glossary of Key Terms

Ahura Mazda: The chief deity of Zoroastrianism, the main religion of the Persian Empire, emphasized by Xerxes.

Artaxerxes I: A Persian king who signed the Peace of Callias with the Greeks, ending the conflict on terms favorable to the Greeks.

Battle of Gaugamela: One of two decisive battles where Alexander the Great defeated the Persian Empire.

Battle of Granicus River: The first battle where Alexander the Great's army fought Persian troops, marking a key step in his conquest of Persia.

Battle of Himera: A defeat for the Carthaginians, allies of the Persians, that occurred around the same time as the Persian defeat in Greece in 480 BCE.

Battle of Issus: A significant battle in which Alexander the Great conquered Persian forces, further weakening the Persian Empire.

Battle of Marathon: An early battle in the Greco-Persian Wars, which the Persians lost, though not a major setback for their overall campaign.

Battle of Mycale: A battle in which the Persian fleet was caught and destroyed by the Greeks in 479 BCE.

Battle of Plataea: A Persian army of 40-50 thousand men was defeated by the Greeks in Ionia in 479 BCE.

Battle of Salamis: A decisive naval battle where the Greek fleet defeated the Persian fleet, marking a crucial turning point in the Persian Wars.

Carthaginians: People of Carthage who were allies of the Persians.

Darius I: A Persian king known for his administrative genius, coinage system, and the Royal Road.

Derrick: A gold coin created by Darius I, named after him.

Fertile Crescent: The region of the Middle East encompassing the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys that was the seat of many of the ancient Mesopotamian empires.

Hellenism: The culture of ancient Greece, adopted and spread by Alexander the Great and his successors.

Koine Greek: The common dialect of Greek that became the lingua franca of the Hellenistic world.

Logistics: The art of moving, supplying, and maintaining troops and supplies, in which Alexander the Great was a master.

Peace of Callias: A treaty signed by Artaxerxes I with the Greeks, which marked the end of hostilities and acknowledged Greek dominance.

Royal Road: An extensive road system constructed by Darius I to unite the Persian Empire.

Satrapy: A province of the Persian Empire, each ruled by a satrap.

Siglos: A silver coin created by Darius I, etymologically related to the Semitic word shekel.

Thermopylae: A narrow pass where a small group of Greeks, notably Spartans, held off a much larger Persian army to provide time for the Athenians to evacuate.

Xerxes: The Persian king, known as Ahasuerus in the Bible, who launched a large invasion of Greece and lost several decisive battles.

5. FAQs on Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 23, Persians to Greeks, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Persian and Greek Conflicts and the Rise of Alexander the Great

1. **What were some of the key administrative innovations of King Darius I of Persia, and why were they significant?**
2. Darius I is considered an organizational genius who implemented several key administrative changes that greatly strengthened the Persian Empire. He established a satrapy system with checks and balances to prevent rebellions by local rulers, ensuring loyalty to the throne. He created the office of royal tax collector, giving him direct control over revenue across the empire, resulting in unprecedented wealth. He also built a massive trunk road stretching over 1,600 miles, with 111 stations for soldiers and horses, which greatly improved communication and troop movement throughout his vast domain. Lastly, he standardized coinage with the introduction of the gold daric and silver siglos, named after him, which revolutionized trade and currency usage. These innovations contributed significantly to the empire's longevity and efficiency, with the administrative framework lasting for the remainder of its existence.
3. **How did the Persian King Xerxes react to revolts in his empire?**
4. Upon taking the throne, Xerxes faced the typical revolts that followed a change of power, including rebellions by anti-Zoroastrian priests. He responded with religious reform, establishing the worship of Ahura Mazda as the official religion. In response to revolts in Egypt and Babylon, Xerxes reconquered them. In Babylon, specifically, he razed the city's walls, destroyed its temples and fortifications, melted a massive gold statue of Baal, and removed the title "King of Babylon" from his royal titles, reducing the city to a satrapy. These actions set a precedent for future Persian kings, characterized by constant suppression of revolts through military force.

5. **What were the key battles in the Greco-Persian Wars, and why was the Battle of Salamis so decisive?**
6. The Greco-Persian Wars involved several crucial battles. While the Battle of Marathon is well-known, it was not as decisive as the Battle of Salamis. The Battle of Thermopylae, where Spartan warriors held off a much larger Persian force, while militarily a loss for the Greeks, gave Athens time to evacuate its fleet. At the Battle of Salamis, the Greek navy lured the larger Persian fleet into a narrow waterway, which hindered their maneuverability, allowing the smaller Greek ships to decisively defeat them. This naval loss was a turning point. The defeat at Salamis was pivotal because it cut off the supply lines for the Persian land army, which was primarily fed by sea, leading to their withdrawal from Greece.
7. **What were the long-term consequences of the Persian defeat in Greece?**
8. The Persian defeat in Greece, marked by the Battle of Salamis, was a turning point. Their losses weakened their attempts to conquer Greece, although peace was only established between the Greeks and Persians later during the rule of Artaxerxes I through the Peace of Callias, a peace treaty that heavily favored the Greeks. The defeat shifted Persia's focus towards internal consolidation and away from further westward expansion. The Greeks, relieved from Persian threat, however, fell into disunity and infighting. This disunity was further exacerbated by the Persians who used their gold to influence Greek states against each other, weakening the Greeks further, as the Persian empire slowly decayed from within.
9. **How did Alexander the Great ultimately defeat the Persian Empire?**
10. Alexander the Great's campaign against Persia was characterized by a series of well-executed strategies and logistics. He met initial Persian resistance at the Granicus River, achieving a hard-fought victory. Instead of directly pursuing the remaining Persian forces, Alexander moved south to conquer Egypt, where he was received as a liberator. After consolidating his position, Alexander returned to engage the Persians and achieved decisive victories at the battles of Issus and Gaugamela. Alexander's logistical genius allowed him to move and supply his army successfully over vast distances, which also unnerved his opponents. This enabled the victories and eventually led to the assassination of the Persian king and the fall of the Persian Empire.

11. What role did logistics play in Alexander the Great's military success?

Logistics were crucial to Alexander the Great's victories. Unlike his opponents, Alexander was a master of military logistics. For example, during his invasion of Egypt, Alexander provisioned his troops by sea, allowing his army to remain supplied despite being deep into enemy territory. When moving troops into Mesopotamia, he transported parts of his navy on rollers across land, then put the ships into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to provision his troops from them. These innovative methods allowed Alexander to sustain his armies effectively and played a significant role in his military successes.

1. **What were Alexander the Great's aims beyond military conquest, and how did these impact the regions he conquered?**
2. Alexander the Great's aims extended beyond military conquest to cultural transformation. He was an apostle of Hellenism, actively working to spread Greek culture across his empire. He established numerous cities, many named "Antioch," to serve as centers of Hellenistic culture and populated them with Macedonian soldiers to further spread his ideals. He sought to introduce a common Greek language, *koine* Greek, a common culture, and possibly a common religion. Although he was only partially successful in this, his efforts left a lasting cultural legacy and created tensions between the established eastern cultures and the new Greek influences.
3. **What is the legacy of the conflict between East and West, particularly in the context of the ancient world and how does it relate to the modern day?**
4. The conflict between East and West is a major theme in history with a long legacy. This conflict was heightened by Alexander the Great's conquest and attempted Hellenization of the East. The tension continues between those who adopted Greek culture and those who preserved their own Semitic traditions. This tension is reflected in the conflict between the Islamic world, which is rooted in Semitic language and culture, and the Hellenized West and persists to this day, reflecting the ongoing cultural and political divides along the same East-West lines laid down centuries ago. Thus Alexander the Great is seen as a hinge figure from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and from the Middle Eastern to the Hellenized world, a world whose tension is still felt today.