

Chapter 8: The Greek Adventure: 8-8 Alexander and the Creation of a World Empire

Book Title: World Civilizations

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## 8-8 Alexander and the Creation of a World Empire

After the battle at Chaeronea—which brought him mastery of the former poleis of Greece—King Philip of Macedonia was assassinated, and his young son, Alexander, succeeded to the throne. In his thirteen-year reign (336–323 B.C.E.), [Alexander the Great \(\(356–323 B.C.E.\) Son of King Philip II of Macedon. Remembered for his conquest of the Persian Empire and most of the Near East, 336–323 B.C.E., from which the Hellenistic era began.\)](#) conquered most of the world known to the Greeks and proved himself to be one of the most remarkable individuals in world history. His boldness and vigor became the stuff of legend among the Greeks who fought under him. Alexander's break with previous military tradition regarding the status of the conqueror is also memorable.

At the time of his death, Philip had been organizing a large, combined Macedonian-Greek army with the announced purpose of invading the huge Persian Empire. After swiftly putting down a rebellion in Thebes, Alexander continued this plan and crossed the Hellespont in 334 with an army of about 55,000 men (very large for the time). In three great battles fought in Asia Minor, the young general brought down the mightiest empire the world had yet seen, the empire of Darius III of Persia, who was slain by his own troops after the third and decisive loss at Gaugamela in present-day Iraq (see [Map 8.2](#)).

### Map 8.2

#### Alexander's Empire and the Successor Kingdoms

The huge area conquered by Alexander between 334 and 324 B.C.E. was too large to control from a single center. It quickly broke down into regional kingdoms under several of Alexander's generals after the conqueror's death.

#### Thinking About This Map

Using the map scale, measure the east-to-west distance of Alexander's Empire. Locate and name the three successor kingdoms.



Conquering an unresisting Egypt, Alexander then invaded the Persian heartland and proceeded eastward into the unknown borderlands of India. After spending five years defeating the numerous small kingdoms of the Indus basin and the commercially valuable Bactrian cities to its north (see [Chapter 4](#)), his remaining troops finally mutinied and refused to go farther. In 324 Alexander led his exhausted men back to Persia. A year later he died in Babylon at the age of thirty-three. The few years of his reign and his much-disputed view of the desirable form of imperial government would have a lasting effect on much of the world's history.

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