Who was Alexander the Great?

Alexander was born around July 20th, 356 BCE.

Alexander III of Macedon is known as Alexander the Great. He considered himself a god, his admirer thought he was a military genius, and his enemies thought of him as pure evil.

He was the son of the king of Macedon, Philip II, and his fourth wife, Olympias. Although Philip had eight wives, Olympias was his principal wife for some time.

By age sixteen, Alexander has his first military victory. By age twenty, Alexander was King of Macedon. It is possible that his rise to power included participation in the murder of his father. Philip II was murdered by one of his own bodyguards.

By age thirty, Alexander the Great had conquered the entire “known” world.

Most of what we know about Alexander the Great is taken from a book titled *The Deeds of Alexander*, written during his life by Alexander’s personal historian. While this text is gone, other texts, written 400 years after, were based on it. They vary a great deal and offer many biases.

After crushing rebellion in Thebes and conquering Troy, Alexander moved into Persia. Alexander loses fewer that 200 troops, and the nation now known as Alexander the Great controlled Turkey.

Alexander the Great becomes the Lord of all of Asia. Now, Alexander is twenty-three years old and his empire covers a quarter of a million miles.

When Alexander arrives in Egypt, it is under Persian control. Prior to entering into battle again with the Persians, Alexander enters Jerusalem. He is shown a prophecy from the book of Daniel, which described a mighty Greek king who would conquer the Persian Empire. Alexander spared Jerusalem.

Later, Alexander visited The Oracle of Siwa at an Oasis in the Libyan Desert. When the Oracle spoke to Alexander, it is possible that his inelegant Greek lead to a translation error, and the Oracle accidently told Alexander that he was the son of a god. Alexander, happy with this message, was now convinced that he was, in fact, a god.

On his arrival in Egypt, Alexander was seen as a liberator and crowned Pharaoh by the Egyptians. Despite being outnumbered five to one, Alexander was able to defeat the Persians and gain control of Egypt. He was now twenty-five years old.

Next, the Babylonians crowned Alexander “King of the Universe”. At this time, Alexander named fifty cities after himself, two after his horse, and one after his dog.

Once the kingdom of Persia is under his control, Alexander the Great begins to adopt Persian customs and culture. He invites Persians into his royal court. Alexander’s Macedonian soldiers do not agree with their leader’s decision. They believe that they have come to conquer Persia, not become part of it.

Alexander takes a Persian bride. This outrages his troops. Alexander also insists that his troops prostrate themselves in front of him. The troops see this as an honour reserved strictly for the gods. Soon, an assassination plot against Alexander is in the works.

Alexander has his trusted general and would-be assassin murdered. Later, during a drunken argument, Alexander kills his close friend Clitus. Alexander is so devastated by this situation that he tries to kill himself and has to be restrained. Alexander falls into depression.

Alexander’s army moves east, conquering India. They continue east past Pakistan. Finally, Alexander’s troops rebel. The general pretend that they receive a “divine omen” telling them that they need to return home.

Alexander decides to return home across the desert, even though they could easily have returned home by ship. Three-quarters of Alexander’s army dies in the desert.

After a close friend dies of fever, Alexander goes on another drinking binge. He gets a fever that lasts for twelve days. He loses the use of his legs and arms. Alexander then loses the ability to speak. It is likely that this condition was typhoid fever due to contamination.

Just a few days short of his thirty-third birthday, in 323 BC, Alexander the Great dies.

When he is asked, on his deathbed, whom the empire should pass to, Alexander answers: “to the strongest”.