

The Gordian Knot

In Greek legend, the Gordian knot was the name given to an intricate knot used by Gordius to secure his oxcart. Gordius, who was a poor peasant, arrived with his wife in a public square of Phrygia in an oxcart. An oracle had informed the populace that their future king would come riding in a wagon. Seeing Gordius, the people made him king. In gratitude, Gordius dedicated his oxcart to Zeus, tying it up with a peculiar knot. An oracle foretold that he who untied the knot would rule all of Asia.

Many people tried to undo the knot but all to no avail.

In 333 B.C. Alexander the Great had invaded Asia Minor and arrived in the central mountains at the town of Gordium; he was 23. Undefeated, but without a decisive victory either, he was in need of an omen to prove to his troops and his enemies that the outcome of his mission - to conquer the known world - was possible.

In Gordium, by the Temple of the Zeus Basilica, was the ox cart, which had been put there by the King of Phrygia over 100 years before. The staves of the cart were tied together in a complex knot with the ends tucked away inside.

Having arrived at Gordium it was inconceivable that the young, impetuous King would not tackle the legendary "Gordian Knot".

Alexander climbed the hill and approached the cart as a crowd of curious Macedonians and Phrygians gathered around. They watched intently as Alexander struggled with the knot and became frustrated.

Alexander, stepping back, called out, "What does it matter how I loose it?" With that, he drew his sword, and in one powerful stroke severed the knot.

That night there was a huge electrical storm, which the seers conveniently interpreted to mean the gods were pleased with the actions of this so-called Son of Zeus who had cut the Gordian knot.