

Come Follow Me

Matthew 1,
Luke 1





ALEXANDER
THE GREAT

The Intertestamental Period 530-4 B.C.E.

What were the biggest events that shaped the world of Jesus and the apostles?

The Persian Era 536-336 B.C.E.

The Second Temple is constructed. The Jews seek to regain their autonomy and rebuild their religion after the return from the Babylonian Exile.

The Greek Era 336-323 B.C.E.

This is the beginning of the Hellenization of the ancient world after Alexander the Great's conquest of the known world. Jews begin to speak Greek and the learned Jews who want to preserve their religious traditions know that eventually the ideas and texts of their religion will need to be accessible in the Greek language.

The Egyptian Era 323-200 B.C.E.

With the death of Alexander in 323 B.C.E., the Greek empire became divided into the Diadochi, or the four rival families that succeeded Alexander. The most notable Diadochi include Ptolemy, Antigonus, Cassander, and Seleucus as the last remaining at the end of the Wars of the Successors, ruling in Egypt, Asia-Minor, Macedon and Persia respectively, all forging dynasties lasting several centuries. Ptolemy Soter gained dominance over Egypt and soon ruled over Israel.

Making a Greek Bible – 300 B.C.E.

According to Josephus, Ptolemy II was desirous to collect every book and thus had the Hebrew scriptures translated into Greek for his library. Legend has it that this translation took place in 72 days and was a miraculous event.

ΓΕΝΕΣΙΣ

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν. ²ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ¹
ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ
πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος. ³καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ³
Γενηθήτω φῶς. καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς. ⁴καὶ εἶδεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ὅτι ⁴
καλόν. καὶ διεχώρισεν ὁ θεὸς ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον
τοῦ σκότους. ⁵καὶ ἐκάλεσεν ὁ θεὸς τὸ φῶς ἡμέραν καὶ τὸ σκότος ⁵
ἐκάλεσεν νύκτα. καὶ ἐγένετο ἑσπέρα καὶ ἐγένετο πρωί, ἡμέρα μία.

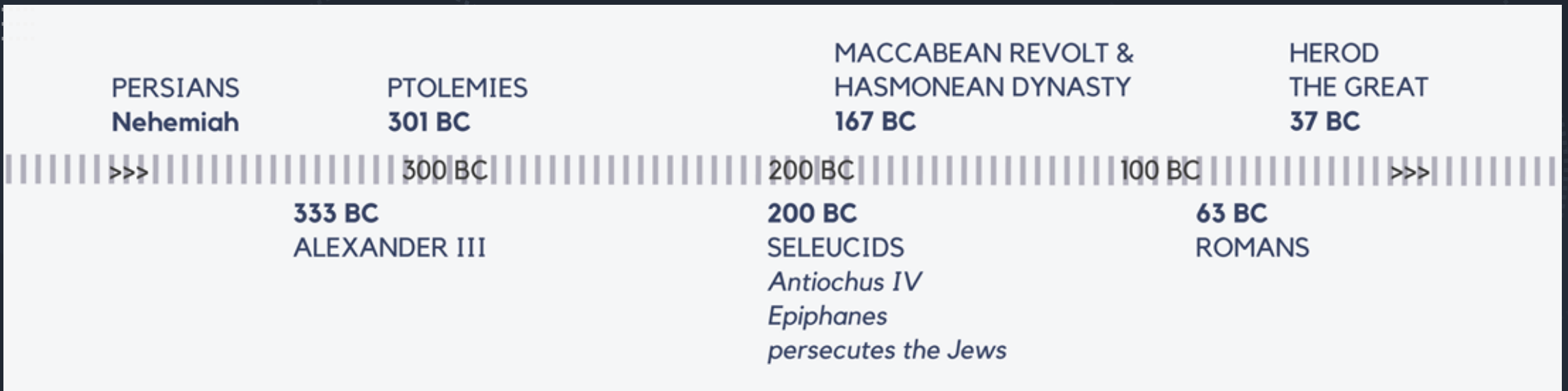


The Syrians and Antiochus Epiphanes 200-166 B.C.E.

When the Syrians defeated Egypt in the battle of Panium in the summer of 200 BCE, control of Judea passed to Syria. Under the rule of Antiochus III the Great the Jews were given a period of tax relief, and the Jews were allowed to live according to the law of their forefathers. Everything seemed to go well until the Hellenizing party replaced the high priest and set off a political conflict that brought Antiochus to Jerusalem.

The Syrians and Antiochus Epiphanes 200-166 B.C.E.

In 168 B.C.E., Antiochus set about destroying every distinctive characteristic of the Jewish faith, forbidding sacrifices, circumcision, and observance of the Sabbath and feasts. He pillaged the city of Jerusalem and killed many of the inhabitants. He also stole the money from and desecrated the Jerusalem Temple by offering a sacrifice to Zeus. **The Jews who would not bend to Antiochus Epiphanes' will were whipped and crucified**, while their wives were also executed.



The Maccabean Era 165-63 B.C.E.

An elderly priest names Mattathias, of the house of Hasmon, lived with his sons in a village northwest of Jerusalem. When a Syrian official tried to enforce heathen sacrifice, Mattathias rebelled, slew the Syrian official, and fled to the mountains with his family. Many of faithful Jews joined him.



The Maccabean Era 165-63 B.C.E.

After the death of Mattathias, three of his sons carried on the revolt in succession: Judas Maccabaeus (166-160 BCE), Jonathan (160-142 BCE), and Simon (143-134 BCE). These men had such success that by 165 BCE, they had retaken Jerusalem, cleansed the temple, and restored their Jewish worship. Today, Jews around the world commemorate this event as the Feast of Hanukkah. Finally, under the leadership of Simon, the Jews received their independence (142 BCE).



The Roman Era 63 BCE – The Gospels

The independence of the Jews ended in 63 BCE, when Pompey entered Jerusalem as a conqueror and representative of Imperial Roma. Aristobulus II, claiming to be the king of Israel, locked Pompey's forces out of Jerusalem. This angered Pompey, and after a three-month siege, Pompey was able to penetrate the walls and inflict heavy casualties on Jerusalem. Pompey even entered into the Holy of Holies, at the protest of the priests at the temple.

(Left: Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus)

The Roman Era 63 BCE – The Gospels

In 47 BCE, Julius Caesar appointed Antipater the Idumaeen procurator of Judea. Herod I, the son of Antipater, eventually became the king of the Jews around 40 B.C.E. Although Herod the Great, as he was called, planned and carried out the building of the new temple in Jerusalem, he was a loyal Hellenist and detested the Hasmonaean family. ***He killed every descendant of the Hasmonaean family, even his own wife*** Marianne, the granddaughter of John Hyrcanus. Then he proceeded to murder his own two sons. It has been reported that Augustus said, “It is better to be Herod’s pig than his son.” Whether he said that or not, it does seem evident that being in Herod’s family had a certain amount of risk involved. This is the Herod who is on the throne when Matthew tells us of the birth of Jesus.

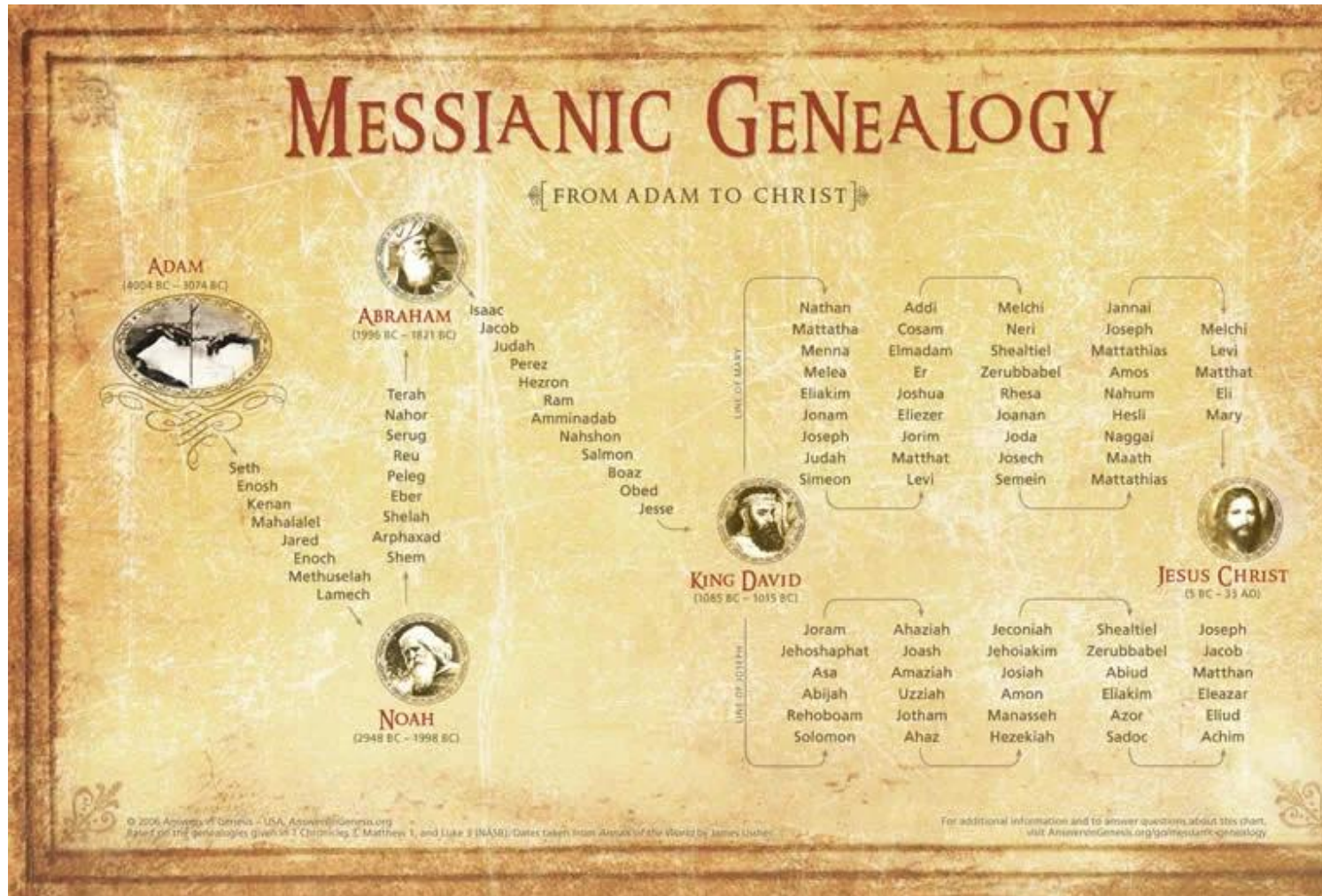
Matthew: The Tax Collector

Matthew's audience was most likely the Jewish people—those who were familiar with the writings of the Hebrew Bible, what Christians today call the Old Testament. Matthew continually works to incorporate the ancient prophecies of the Hebrew Bible into his narrative to portray Jesus as the Messiah who had been spoken of anciently.



The Genealogy of Jesus

Fourteen Generations: Matthew 1.1-17





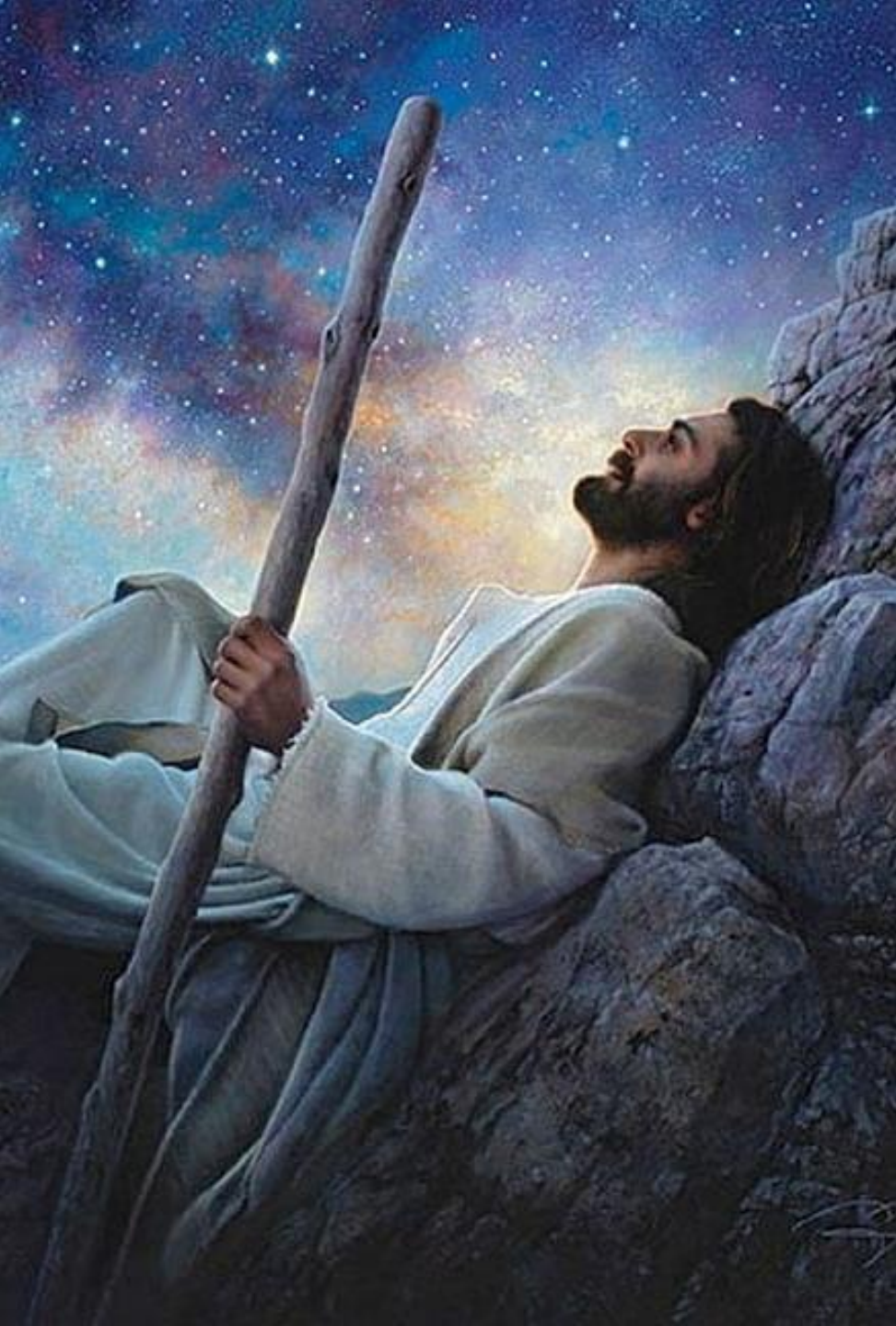
The Women in Jesus' Genealogical Line





Heroes of Israel

All these women experienced unusual circumstances that placed them in a dangerous position. All five of these women were in a unique circumstance to perpetuate the Kingdom of Israel. Had these women not acted, Israel's history would have been cut short. These women were actively engaged in bringing about God's purposes, ***even at the risk of their very lives.***



Jesus: The Son of a Mortal Mother and an Immortal Father: Matthew 1.18-25

President Russell M. Nelson explained that the Atonement of Jesus Christ “required a personal sacrifice by an immortal being not subject to death. Yet He must die and take up His own body again. The Savior was the only one who could accomplish this. **From His mother He inherited power to die. From His Father He obtained power over death.**

President Russell M. Nelson, “Constancy amid Change,” Ensign, Nov. 1993, 34.

Luke: The Physician

Luke was a companion of Paul and probably the writer of both Luke and Acts in the New Testament. He does not directly name himself in his writings, nor is he mentioned except incidentally in the New Testament.



Zacharias at
the altar:
Luke 1.8-22





Mary visits Elizabeth: Luke
1.39-56