

Venus The Star Of Bethlehem

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To [index](#) file: www.scripturescholar.com/VenusStarofBethlehem.htm or [.pdf](#)

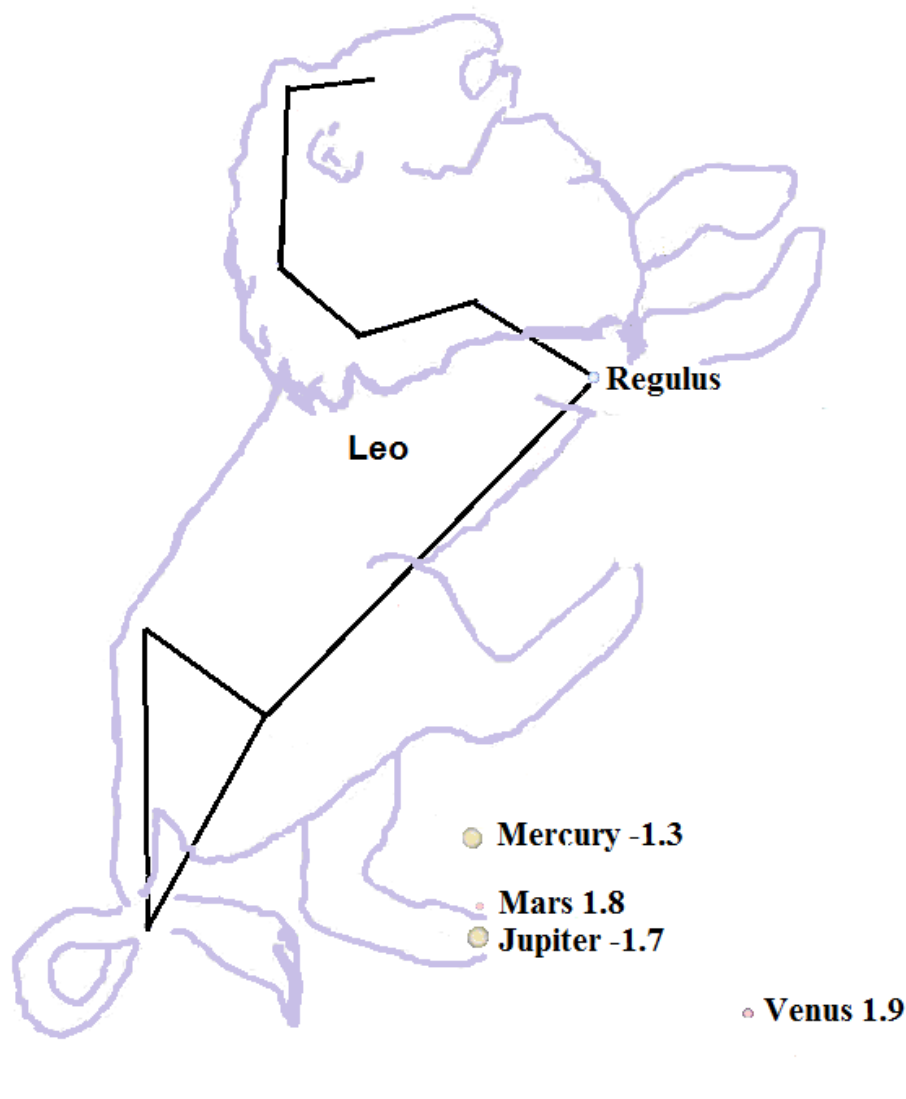
YouTube 1: Jesus' Star: chapter 1—<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7-NOgTpsiE> **NEW**

YouTube 2: The Bible reveals the star of Bethlehem <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xHE9U3Pg4o>

YouTube 3: The wise men follow the star to Jesus' house—<https://youtu.be/tLjGUHRpwcQ>

19 to 23-minute talks, covering much of the material presented here.

See Also: Esther and the King's Golden Scepter—<http://www.scripturescholar.com/EstherScepter.htm> [.pdf](#)



Constellation of Leo
before sunrise from
Jerusalem August 24, 2
B.C.¹ All dates are
Julian. (The view from
Babylon is the same)

Numbers after
star/planet names are the
relative brightness;
lower numbers are
brighter, negative
numbers are very bright.
Star size represents its
brightness;

three planets picture a
scepter in the hind feet
of the lion (Leo)

Extinction makes
planets golden or rosy,
near the horizon

←Horizon

←Sun

The star of Bethlehem was Venus, the brightest star. This star guided the magi by pointing to a picture of a lion with a golden scepter. It announced the Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who would rule all the earth, was coming then went towards Judah. Later it led them to His

¹Chart by Cartes du Ciel, www.astrosurf.com/astropc.

house in Bethlehem on Passover. It was primarily a study of Scripture, not the heavens, which led to finding His enigmatic star.

Near Christmas, we hear the story in Matthew 2:1-15 of the magi (wise men) visiting Jesus, finding Him by heading to the place the star waited. Why did the wise men go to Jerusalem to worship a child king? The short answer is, they observed Venus rise before sunrise as shown above and continue to rise after sunrise on August 24, 2 B.C.² Venus, called a wandering star by the ancients (Jude 1:13), fulfilled prophecies given by Jacob c. 1800 B.C and Balaam c. 1400 B.C. The magi explained why they came, “we saw his star at its rising” (Matthew 2:2). The image shows Venus rose just before dawn to mark a golden vertical line of planets formed by Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter.³

Why identify Venus as the star of Bethlehem? In the last chapter of the Bible, Jesus called Himself “the bright morning star” (Revelation 22:16). Venus is ‘the bright morning star.’ How can the ‘bright morning star’ be identified as Venus? The morning stars are Mercury and Venus. The ancients referred to precisely two planets as ‘morning stars.’ They were called morning stars because they were usually only visible for a few hours before dawn when they were visible in the morning. They are visible then because they are closer to the sun than the earth.

Venus can rarely be seen during the day and is the brightest natural object in the sky after the sun and moon. It is the brightest object that can be called a star. All other heavenly bodies are further from the sun than the earth and are visible throughout the night. Mercury and Venus are also evening stars. Again, they are evening stars because they are only visible for a few hours after sunset when visible in the evening. Since Jesus called Himself the bright morning star or Venus and the magi saw His star as it rose, Venus was the star the magi saw, and we call the star of Bethlehem.

Venus rises as both the morning and the evening star. Since Jesus is ‘the bright *morning* star,’ it had to be Venus rising in the morning, not in the evening. Venus spends about half of its cycle as a morning star. Once every 1.6 years (584 days), Venus rises with the morning sun for the first time.

When Venus rose near Jesus’ birth, the magi had to spot Venus when it rose to observe these signs. The magi were professional astronomer-astrologers, so they would be able to spot Venus at the earliest possible time. Since Venus is the brighter of the two morning stars, and Jesus is *the bright morning star*, Venus is His star. The magi observed His star rise; therefore, they referred to Venus’s first rise in a particular cycle.

How can we identify the specific time the star rose? In Matthew 2:2, the phrase ‘*EN TE ANATOLE*’ (ἐν τῇ ανατολῇ) (in its rising) because it is in the singular, with the article and in contrast to *APO ANATOLWN* (from the east) Matthew 2:1 probably is not a geographical expression, but an astronomical expression; simultaneously with its rising [near the horizon] also Matthew 2:9.⁴ The term appears to refer to a star simultaneously rising with the sun (a heliacal rising).

²All dates are Julian. Gregorian dates are 2 days earlier August 22, 2 B.C. The sign was probably visible on August 23, 2 B.C., but either day works and the 24th was more visible.

³ Some say extinction made these planets invisible, for a rebuttal see planetary visibility section.

⁴ Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Chicago Press, 1979, p. 62.

The verb “we saw” (*EIDOMEN*, εἶδομεν) is in the aorist tense, meaning punctiliar action (at a point in time). The magi came because of a particular event, not because of one that endured for weeks or months. This verse is frequently mistranslated. If Matthew meant ‘we have seen,’ he’d have used the pluperfect tense. I discuss the common word for rising of a heavenly object *ANATELLO* later.

An astronomy program allows one to determine the possible dates and times Venus rose.



Venus rises with the sun once every 1.6 years. Two dates Venus rose are August 24, 2 B.C., and March 27, 1 A.D.⁵ The latter date was a Passover, which proves to be significant. Since Venus is Jesus’ star, and we know when Venus rose in the morning, we can see what the magi observed. I picture what they saw on the first page. It is easy to look at this scene and not realize its significance, but I will explain it. It took me a year to understand it because I needed to link the picture to the Scriptures.

One possible depiction of the banner of the tribe of Judah⁶

Why Did God Make the Sun, Moon, and Stars?

The Bible explains the purpose of the sun, moon, and stars in the Bible’s first chapter. God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for *signs* and for seasons and for days and years” (Genesis 1:14). The Bible groups the sun, moon, stars, planets, comets, etc. Generally, their purpose is to be lights and order time, but a purpose is to be signs.⁷

The Bible uses the word sign, in its simplest form, synonymously with our word picture.⁸ The stars form connect-the-dots images we call constellations. The Bible mentions constellations, some by name: the Bear, Orion, Pleiades.⁹ The sign for Judah was a banner with a picture of the Lion of the tribe of Judah.¹⁰ The Lion of the tribe of Judah is the Messiah. The constellation associated with Judah is Leo, which is Latin for lion.¹¹ From the context, sign means picture and relates to time because of its association with seasons, days, and years. A purpose for the sun, moon, and stars are pictures marking particular times.¹²

The Date of Jesus’ Birth

Jesus’ birth appears to be unrelated to this rising of Venus, except that it follows the sign of

⁵ Earlier heliacal rising dates are January 15, 3 B.C. and June 15, 5 B.C.

⁶ <http://jahtruth.net/britspan.htm>.

⁷ Luke 21:25 There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. It might go against your belief system, but God does reveal things to the nations by the motions of the sun, moon and stars.

⁸ This is a simplification, sign can mean many things, but picture is one of the primary meanings.

⁹ Job 9:9, 38:3, 31-32. Isaiah 13:10; Amos 5:8; Wisdom 7:29.

¹⁰ Num 2:3, 10:14 “Standard”, <http://www.statemaster.com/encyclopedia/Lion-of-Judah>.

¹¹ E.W. Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars*, 1893, p. 163.

¹² In Hebrew the word for sign is *ōth* (אֹת), a word that starts with the first and ends with the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet connected by the letter that means 'and' like "alpha and omega" in Greek. This sign is revealed in the first and last chapters of the Bible, it is the sign of signs.

the Messiah, the Lion of Judah with His scepter, and precedes the following rising of Venus. Jesus was born December 25, 1 B.C.¹³ this is the traditional date. This date is near the latest that modern scholarship can support. It led to the finding of the star of Bethlehem.

In 70 A.D., when general Titus (later Caesar) conquered Jerusalem (commemorated by the Arch of Titus), he brought the Jewish census records to Rome. These census records allowed checking Jesus' birthday in Rome over the following centuries, but they are now lost. God wanted the world to know the date of Jesus' birth. A search of the census records was requested on at least three occasions to investigate Jesus' birth. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.), addressing Emperor Marcus Aurelius—stated Jesus was born in Bethlehem, “as you can ascertain also from the registers of the taxing.” After that, they started to celebrate Jesus' birthday on December 25. Tertullian (160-250 A.D.) wrote “the census of Augustus—that most faithful witness of the Lord's nativity, kept in the archives of Rome.” When Cyril of Jerusalem (348-386 A.D.) asked Pope Julius to assign the correct day of Christ's birth, “from the census documents brought by Titus to Rome,” Julius assigned December 25.¹⁴

There were two Christmases between the first and second sign in the sky. The other reasons for selecting this date will be developed under the sun and the moon section. There was another sign in the heavens marking His birth.

The shepherds kept watch in the fields during the winter months starting about mid-December because it was the lambing season. Sheep would trample newborn lambs in the pens where they spent the night most of the year. I will provide historical proof.

His birth did not occur during Passover or Tabernacles, or the shepherds would have been in Jerusalem for the feast with their flock (to be available for sacrifices). Also, they were *watching their flocks*, not living in a *SUKKAH* (temporary shelters Israelites lived in during the fall feast of Booths/Tabernacles/Sukkoth).

The Prophetic Link

Six centuries earlier, the prophet Daniel was the chief of the magi (Daniel 2:48), so the magi learned of God and the Bible. An important discovery was connecting the scene on the first page at the rising of His star on August 24, 2 B.C. to Jacob's well-known prophesy in Genesis 49:9-10. Jacob (also called Israel) called his son Judah a lion; thus, the Bible links Judah with a lion. Venus rose in Leo. On that day, three planets, Mercury, Mars, and Jupiter, formed a vertical line in the hind feet of the constellation Leo. Jacob prophesied, “*The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his*” (Genesis 49:10). The three planets in a line form a scepter. The magi observed the golden scepter, a mark of kingship, in Leo representing the tribe of Judah, marked by His star. After marking the picture, Venus rose in the sky after sunrise. Later the color of the planets will be explained, but briefly, their color reddens near the horizon, like the sun as it sets.

¹³Bruce Killian, “Dionysius Exiguus Got It Right”, 2000.

www.scripturescholar.com/DionysiusExiguus.pdf, Bruce Killian, “The Chronology of Jesus' Life,” 2019, pp. 25-6, <https://tinyurl.com/y5oth3qy>

¹⁴Cyril Martindale, “Christmas,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume III*, 1908 Robert Appleton Co., Online Edition Copyright, 2003 K. Knight www.newadvent.org/cathen/03724b.htm.

The planets formed a line, picturing a ruler's staff or scepter on August 18, 2 B.C. The stars remained in line, gradually pivoting and shortening until the scepter was vertical. The scepter was 3.5° long, and Orion's belt is 3°. The scepter was brighter than Orion even though Orion is the brightest constellation. This passage is in Hebrew poetry; the ruler's staff and the scepter have a related meaning. Hebrew poetry repeats or contrasts objects, actions, ideas, etc., rather than rhyming words. On the day Venus rose, the line of stars was about to go out of alignment. Venus was 'He that comes' to mark the scepter in Leo. Venus represented Jesus; the scepter belongs to Jesus.

August 23 or 24 were the only days that fit the prophecy, and one had to have excellent visibility conditions. One had to be alert to spot it then. The date is significant because the scepter was visible before it, but His star wasn't visible; it hadn't come. After it, the line of stars didn't form a scepter for two days.

Because the magi studied the heavens, they would be most familiar with the Scripture passages mentioning astronomical objects, like the sun, moon, and stars. The magi were familiar with another prophecy that helped them understand Jacob's prophecy. Balaam said, "I see *him*, but not now; I behold *him*, but not near. *A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel*" (Numbers 24:17). This star is the first mention in the Bible of a single star. The first mention of a word in the Bible is often significant. Balaam refers to a star as 'him,' and parallels a star and a scepter. Identifying a star with Him reveals why they said they saw 'his star.' This section is Hebrew poetry, so the scepter and star are related objects. Verse 24:9 mentions a crouching lion and a lioness, similar to Genesis 49:9. The meaning of a star will rise out of Jacob is the star represents one who would descend from Jacob. The scepter and His star in Leo fulfill both the prophecy by Jacob and the prophecy of Balaam. These are two Scriptural witnesses to this sign. God announced the king to whom the scepter belonged.

On this day, after the bright morning star rose, it was visible throughout the day. It set in the direction of Jerusalem before sunset. The star pointed the way and preceded them on their journey. Most who write on the star of Bethlehem mention this passage but typically identify the star Regulus with the scepter.

Why the magi came to worship this newborn King

The magi recognized the 'sign' announced a king of the Jews. Why did they journey to 'worship' this king? The angel Gabriel revealed to the prophet Daniel the year the Christ would come (Daniel 9:24-27). The magi knew the year of the Christ's coming neared, as did all of Israel (Luke 3:15). Daniel, a prophet, predicted four world kingdoms, and then a fifth kingdom would be set up as an everlasting kingdom. Everyone would come and worship the king of this fifth kingdom.

Since Daniel's time, the magi knew that four world kingdoms had come: Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Daniel 2:39-44; 8:20-22). This sign was of the king of the fifth kingdom. "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. Note, He is going up to heaven, not coming down from heaven, in this scene. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; *all peoples*, nations and men of every language *worshipped* him. His dominion is an *everlasting dominion* that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14 NIV). The magi came to worship a king who

would rule forever, and all peoples would worship Him.

The magi did not understand the sign of the scepter in Leo until they had researched it. They came to Jerusalem timed to match when His star would again soon rise with the sun, so they would be sure to arrive after the child was born.

Why did the magi come to Jerusalem to look for the king and not Rome? The word Jew comes from 'Judah,' the name of the major surviving tribe of the twelve tribes of Israel. The scepter would not depart Judah. The scepter was a sign of kingly authority or rule. If looking for a King of the Jews, Jerusalem was the logical destination. Jerusalem was the capital and principal city of the Jews. The magi had a second witness. They saw the morning star continue to rise after sunrise in the east. It traveled through the day until it disappeared before sunset in the west, the direction of Jerusalem.

The magi came to Jerusalem looking for the child king, and they probably assumed this child would be the son of the current king. The magi came to worship one who was more than a man, the king who would rule the world forever. The magi timed their arrival in Jerusalem to match the rising of Venus, which coincidentally was on the eve of Passover. After learning from the chief priests and the scribes where the king was to be born, King Herod sent them to the town of Bethlehem 5.5 miles (10km) south. King Herod said search *diligently* for the child, implying he heard the shepherds' report but never found the boy king, so he must have left Bethlehem.

The Day Star

Saint Peter identified the morning star as the day star.¹⁵ "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star (*PHŌSPHORO*, φωσφόρος) arise in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19 KJV)." This time in Venus' orbit, it could be seen throughout the day, even at noon, if sufficiently separated from the sun. H. B. Curtis describes Venus as being visible throughout much of the day.¹⁶

This phenomenon occurs when Venus is near the inferior conjunction (between the sun and earth). It must have sufficient ecliptical latitude (separation from the sun). Curtis viewed Venus with an ecliptical latitude of 9.4 degrees. He states, "Any pair of eyes with normal vision could easily have seen Venus that day." The helical rising of Venus occurs on the first day of visibility after the inferior conjunction. Some ancients refer to the horns of Venus, apparently indicating that they could recognize the phases of Venus.¹⁷ Here is a link to an account of one person who saw the horns of Venus in modern times.¹⁸ Horns in the Bible indicate power, e.g., altars had horns. The magi saw the star rise in the east, but it set in the west fifty minutes before sunset,

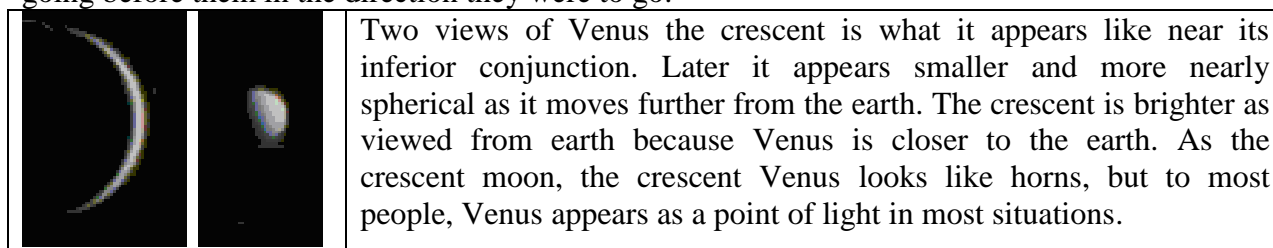
¹⁵ Learned from Leo Bauer LtCdr, USN, a WWII aviator in the South Pacific on a reconnaissance mission, his navigation aids said a fix could be taken off Venus that day and it was visible.

¹⁶ H. B. Curtis, "Venus Visible at Inferior Conjunction," 1935, pp. 18-19, <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/1936PA.....44...18C>.

¹⁷ Campbell, W. W., "Is the Crescent Form of Venus Visible to the Naked Eye?," 1916, p. 85, <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1916PASP...28...85C>.

¹⁸ David Lance Goines, "Inferential Evidence For The Pre-Telescopic Sighting Of The Crescent Venus," Berkeley, California, 1992 <http://www.goines.net/Writing/venus.html>.

going before them in the direction they were to go.¹⁹



In the two helical rising views of the bright morning star cited by the magi, Venus rises less than 3 degrees before the sun but had an ecliptic latitude (horizontal separation from the sun) over 9.5 degrees. Better conditions than Curtis experienced when he could view Venus throughout the day. For one to see Venus, there must be excellent visibility. God put the planets in orbit controlled the weather.

Other Venus References in the Bible

Venus is also called the Dayspring (*ANATOLE*, ανατολη)²⁰ in the Canticle of Zechariah. John the Baptist's father prophesied about Jesus. "*Through the tender mercy of our God when the Dayspring shall dawn upon us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the road of peace*" (Luke 1:78-79). Observe what the text says, this star comes up with the sun, but they can see it in the darkness as a great light, so it is not the sun and can guide our feet (something stars are not known to do). All of these features will be shown to be necessary. The Dayspring was visible with the dawn and dark, so only Venus qualifies.

The Vulgate also identifies the Messiah with the day star in Psalm 110:3 and associates it with a scepter. This Psalm is the most quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament, at twenty-five times. *The Lord said to my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand: Until I make thy enemies thy footstool. The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy power out of Sion: rule thou in the midst of thy enemies. With thee is the principality in the day of thy strength: in the brightness of the saints: from the womb before the day star I begot thee* (Psalm 110 (109):1-3 Douay).

Jesus references this passage as referring to Himself. For example, Matthew 22:44-45 '*The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thy enemies under thy feet*'? *If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?*" Jesus answers that question in Revelation 22:16, "*I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches.*"²¹ *I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.*" The reference to the bright morning star refers back to Psalm 110:3, 'the day-star,' so Jesus confirms that the Vulgate got the translation correct.²² This star also shows up in Job, *and brightness like that of the noon day shall arise to thee at the evening*

¹⁹ Balaam mentions horns of the wild ox (Numbers 24:8) possible linking to the Venus crescent.

²⁰ Dayspring or anatole appears to be a proper name for Venus in the Septuagint.

²¹ Venus could be seen as the messenger, Jesus sends as a testimony for the churches.

²² In contrast Psalm 110:3 in the RSV *Your people will offer themselves freely on the day you lead your host upon the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning like dew your youth will come to you.* What does that mean?

and when thou shalt think thyself consulted thou shalt rise as the day star (Job 11:17 Douay).²³

This star also appears, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (called the Septuagint or LXX), as the anatole (the same word Zechariah used in Luke 1:78) as the translation of the Hebrew word *TSAMACH* (צמח), which is used as a messianic term for Branch, but means ‘a shoot’ (of a plant) or ‘to rise up.’ This translation occurs in Zechariah 3:8; 6:12; and Jeremiah 23:5. In each of these cases, the LXX used the word anatole for the bright morning star. See also Isaiah 4:2. It is reasonable Zechariah would know this because he shares a name with the author.

A Great Light

So the use of anatole in the Greek Bible referring to the Messiah could explain why the magi called Venus ‘His star’ long before John wrote Revelation 22:16. Zechariah links darkness and the shadow of death; morning and evening are shadows of darkness. There are passages in the Old Testament that link the coming of a great light with the Messiah. Isaiah said, *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. ... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever* (Isaiah 9:2, 6-7).

This great light was not the sun because it appears in several other Bible passages directly linked to Jesus. Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16 quoting Isaiah 9:1-2). And we have the prophetic word made more sure. You will do well to pay attention to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts (2 Peter 1:19 RSV). Here the RSV translates day-star as morning-star. So this was a light that could shine in darkness (so it was not the sun), appear at dawn, but it was a great light that could guide.

There is another word in Greek for “rise” *ANATELLO* (ἀνατέλλω); They used it for the rise of a heavenly object. They use anatello for the rising of the sun, moon, stars, and clouds, but it is not linked with the rising with the sun (unless it is the sun rising). It helps to clarify that the anatole refers to rising with the sun. In contrast, anatello refers to any heavenly body rising, whether with the sun or not.²⁴

What the magi saw in Bethlehem

Bethlehem was a small town, located about half a kilometer, east of the north-south ridge of

²³ There are other references to this: Sirach 39:31 & 50:6 (refers to Simon the high priest) Job 11:17; Job 38:32; Rev 2:28; eosphorus (morning star); phosphorus (day star); Hesperus (evening star); anatole (dayspring).

²⁴ ἀνατέλλω is another word in Greek used to rise of sun, moon, stars or clouds, Matt 4:16; Matt 5:45; Matt 13:6; Mark 4:6; Mark 16:2; Luke 12:54; Heb 7:14; James 1:11; 2 Peter 1:19 only in Hebrews 7:14 it is used of Jesus not rising from a line of priests. This is the word one would use of the rising of a star that was not a helical rising.

hills that divides Judah. On Sunday morning, March 27, 1 A.D., the magi watched Venus, the star of Bethlehem, as it rose before sunrise and continued visible in the sky during the day. The bright morning star rose in the east and continued to be visible even after sunset. As the day progressed, the daystar was visible first in the east, then overhead. Finally, it came down in the west over Mary and Jesus' house in the early evening on Passover Monday, March 27, 1 A.D.

When Venus rose over Bethlehem, it was in the constellation of Aries. Aries is the constellation picturing a slain lamb. The rising of Venus marked the coming of the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The magi rejoiced when they saw Venus rise for two reasons. First, they understood it was another sign, Venus marked a Lamb, and they were in a town of sheep. The magi learned from the passage, which identified that the King would be born in Bethlehem, that He would shepherd His flock (Micah 5:2-4). Even though they would have known the star would rise in Aries, they couldn't link sheep/Aries to the Messiah until they connected these passages to Bethlehem. Second, Venus lingered in the sky after the sunset, which was essential to guiding the magi to Jesus' house.

Led By a Star

Matthew 2:9 does not say the star led the magi; instead, it went before them and stood (stopped or waited) over their destination. Stars continually move, and they watched it move from horizon to horizon with the sun. After sunset, it arrived low over the ridge to the west of Bethlehem, over the house of the holy family. At this point, one can discern that the star has gone before them to its destination.

The magi started toward the star, and they saw it appear to wait. As they moved, it waited over the saddle and when they approached, by standing over the house. Venus was alone in the western sky. No other heavenly body was visible, so no other celestial body appeared to be stopped with Venus. The star moved in the sky but waited for them from their viewpoint. Their motion, walking up the hill and toward the house, caused the apparent downward movement of the star to cease.

As they climbed the hill, the apparent height of the star above the ridgeline remained constant. The star moved from the opposite side as they moved toward the house, canceling the magi's motion. It waited for them to arrive. The star would not set until 24 minutes after sunset, so the magi had plenty of time to reach the house before the star set.

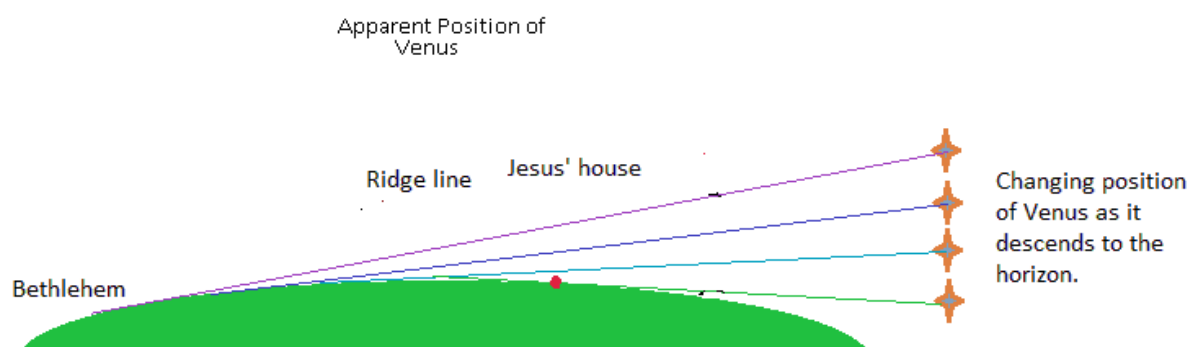
A year and seven months earlier, the star led the magi west after rising in the east on August 24, 2 B.C. The bright morning star rose in the east about four minutes before sunrise, 12.5 degrees south of where the sun rose. It rose and was visible as the day star until fifty minutes before sundown. It set in the west in the direction of the kingdom of Judah (from Babylon or Persia). So the star pointed to a sign of a new king in Jerusalem, but it also moved in the direction they were to go. Since the star pointed to another sign, maybe it would lead the way, indicating, "Follow me." In Bethlehem, it pointed to a heavenly slain lamb. It then waited over the house where the Lamb was early Passover evening.

But there was a difference on that day because Venus was at a different point in its orbit. Venus fell behind the sun, so Venus was still ten degrees above the horizon when the sun set. It would be 24 minutes before Venus set if the magi didn't move and a bit longer if they climbed the ridge to the saddle

Matthew says the star went before them until it stopped over the place where they were (Matthew 2:9). Went before them means that it went ahead of them in the direction they were to go, and they strived to follow it. Many do not believe this could be a real star because stars cannot 'go before' to 'lead' and can't 'stop' over a town, much less a particular house. Those with this belief tend to view the star as an angel (the Bible occasionally calls angels stars Job 38:7). A star couldn't lead the magi because it was too far from the earth.

At Bethlehem, there is a north-south ridge of hills, just west of town, so that from Bethlehem, after sunset, the star appeared to come down near the earth. It was just above the crest of the hills at a saddle to the west of Bethlehem. Because it was visible low in the sky after sunset, the star appeared to linger straight up the road, so it beckoned the magi. So they followed it, following the way west from Bethlehem, up the ridge was in the exact direction, the star shown.

As the magi ascended the hill following the road, the star descended. It appeared stationary (stopped) at the same height above the earth. They followed the star on the road from Bethlehem to the crest, which happened to be in the correct direction for them to follow the star. As they ascended the road, they came to His house just beyond the crest. The star continued to descend, always remaining above the horizon, in the exact location from their viewpoint. It was as if the star was visible only to lead them. As it declined, it led the magi to a point on the crest of the hills west of town about 24 minutes after sunset and about 12.3 degrees north of west.



As the His Star descended, the magi climbed the hill, so the star appeared stationary versus the horizon just above the hills. Because as they ascended the ridge, Venus descended, so it seems at the same height above the apparent horizon.

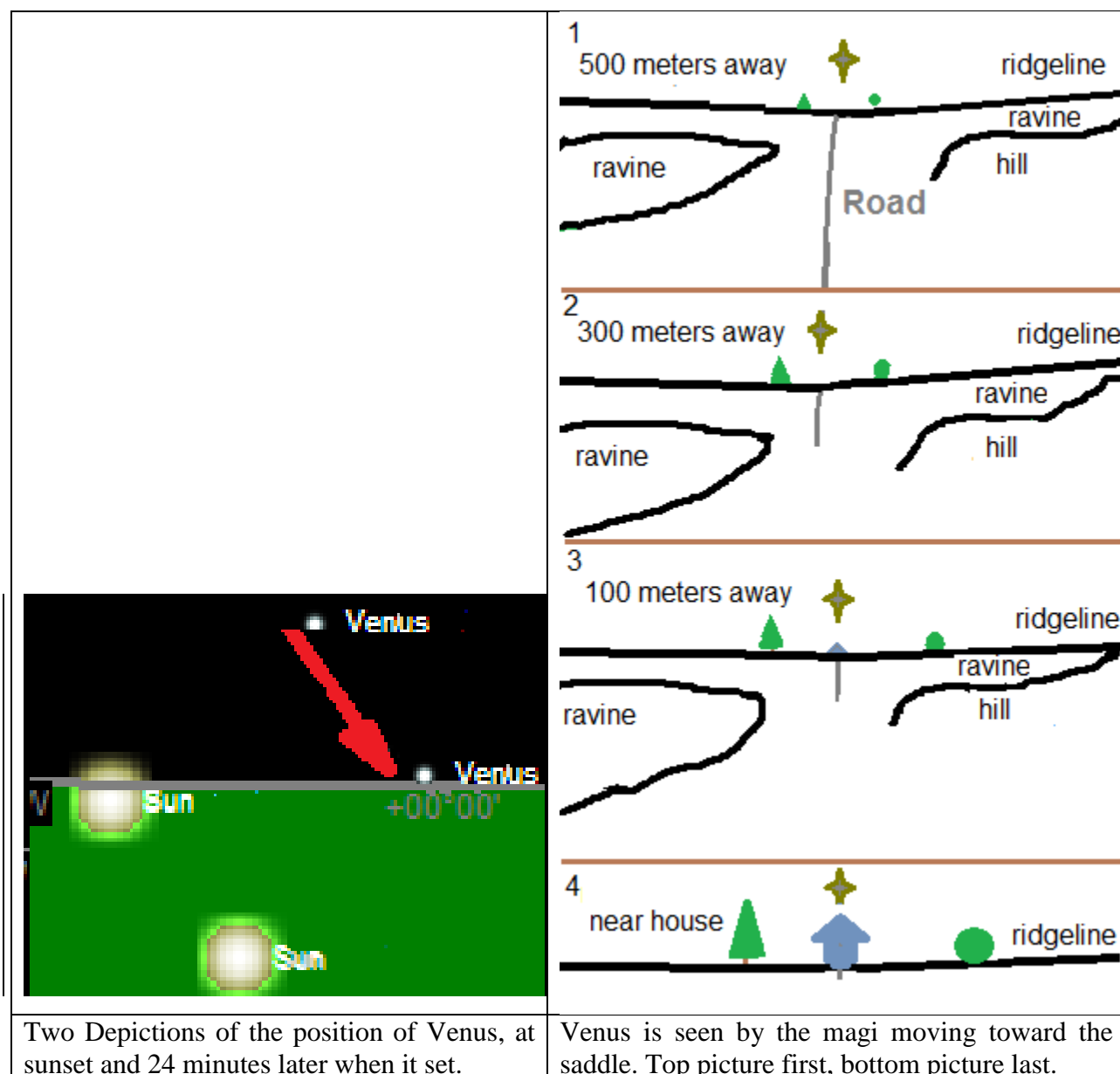
Because their horizon was changing as they moved toward the ridge that the star appeared to stop. The wise men followed Venus west beyond the crest. No other stars or sun were visible to reveal that Venus hadn't stopped in the sky. The full moon and Jupiter were on the opposite horizon and moved typically.

Nearby, they saw the star appear above an isolated house; it stood over the house where Jesus and Mary were. When they got to the house and looked behind that house for the star, it was not visible; it appeared to disappear into that particular house. They said it stopped because it remained at the same height above the earth as they climbed the hill. When they arrived at the house, atmospheric extinction had caused the planet to disappear.

Near the horizon, a small amount of water vapor (humidity) dramatically reduces the visibility of stellar objects. Today two thousand years after the bright morning star guided the

locating the ancient road.

The following charts depict how the magi could follow a star and how it stopped.



It is much more reasonable for the star to lead them during the evening rather than at night because they could travel without the danger of accident and injury. And as Zechariah prophesied, the Dayspring would guide our feet on the road of peace. They followed the side road up from Bethlehem to the main north-south road leading to Jerusalem. Beyond the junction on the ridge was Jesus' house.

That evening the magi visited that house. By divine 'coincidence,' Jesus lived there. The magi needed to go directly to the home of Mary and Joseph, or they would stir up commotion in the town. The message of who Jesus was would quickly and early reach King Herod in

Jerusalem. The magi were awake before dawn, studying the stars and the day watching the star of Bethlehem, so they probably slept soon after leaving Jesus and Mary.

The warning they received in a dream came that night. There was no commotion in Bethlehem, like in Jerusalem, so no one witnessed the magi follow a star. Most people were in Jerusalem celebrating Passover. After the feast, Joseph was warned in a dream during the watch (Exodus 12:42). Jesus and his disciples kept this watch in the garden of Gethsemane thirty-two years later.

Joseph then hurried from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, and in the night, fled with Mary and Jesus to Egypt. So Jesus' flight to Egypt and arrest thirty-two years later were about the same time of year. It was Passover night when Israel fled Egypt for the Promised Land. Passover night, the holy family fled the Promised Land for Egypt. Passover was always a full moon, so they had sufficient light to travel safely.

The magi came at least forty days after Jesus was born. It couldn't be earlier. When His parents presented Him in the Temple at forty days old (Luke 2:22 and Leviticus 12:2-8), the offering included a lamb unless the family was too poor to afford one. Joseph could not afford a lamb to redeem the Redeemer (a lamb cost about one day's wage for a laborer); he had no gold, frankincense, or myrrh.²⁶ The magi visited when Jesus was thirteen weeks or three months old.

The Location of the Holy Families House

Is there any Biblical evidence, Jesus' house was on this ridge? Yes, in several indirect ways. It would be outside the town proper, so it would be easier to hide a newborn baby. (Mary, like Moses' mother, hid him for three months until she could no longer hide him).²⁷

When Joshua divided the Promised Land after the conquest, every family received a parcel of land by lot. The LORD controlled every throw of the die, so God selected this plot of land. In Israel, the land passed from father to son. Joseph was of the house of David (Luke 1:27). He was a direct male descendant of King David. Further, David was a direct male descendant of Boaz (Ruth 4:20-21), so Joseph could inherit property from his ancestor Boaz.

In the book of Ruth, Boaz slept at a threshing floor (guarding his barley harvest) (Ruth 2:3-8). So Boaz likely had a threshing floor as part of his inheritance. They used the wind to help separate chaff from grain kernels at threshing floors, so they were located in windy places. The windiest places are typically ridges, particularly a saddle in a ridge, because it channels the wind. Since the prevailing wind in Judah is from the west, the ridge near Bethlehem would be an excellent place for a threshing floor. A threshing floor was a flat rocky area, located in a windy place outside of town, where they separated the grain from the chaff. It would also be a secure

²⁶ Isaiah links a rising star in the dark and into the day, with specific gifts being brought to the Messiah. Isaiah 60:2-3, 6 See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3 Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. ... Herds of camels will cover your land, ..., bearing gold and frankincense and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.

²⁷ There are many links between Moses and Jesus the prophet like Moses Deuteronomy 18:15-19, for instance both were under a death sentence because they were a male child. Both survived the threat by crossing water into Egypt.

place to build one's house.²⁸

The Gospel in the Heavens

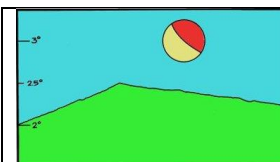
From these signs, seen by the magi, God announced the gospel because the Bible linked the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Passover Lamb. In Revelation 22:16, where Jesus identified the Bright Morning Star with Himself, He also identifies Himself as the Root of David. This phrase only occurs in one other passage, Revelation 5:5-6. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. ... Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne.²⁹

This passage is the only one where the Bible identifies Jesus as the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It also identifies Him as the Lamb, looking as if slain. So this passage brings these signs together with the Bright Morning Star. The two signs in the heavens the magi saw are two key titles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They knew the boy was God because they came to "worship Him" and did so. Combined with the day of the event, these two signs succinctly tell the gospel. The long-promised Divine Son was born to rule the nations and be the sacrificed Passover Lamb for it. The primary purpose of sacrifice was for the forgiveness of sin. So a redeemer would soon arrive.

A Problem When Did Herod Die?

Josephus, a Jewish general, and historian wrote c. 90 A.D. He recorded a lunar eclipse shortly before King Herod the Great's death about ninety years earlier.³⁰ Selecting the proper eclipse is a key to dating his death. The correct eclipse was December 29, 1 B.C., not March 15, 4 B.C. The eclipse of 4 B.C. was too close to Passover for the events Josephus recorded to reasonably occur that year. The other possible eclipse, Jan 10, 1 B.C., was only visible from 2 to 4 AM when few would see it.

On December 29, 1 B.C., the moon has half eclipsed when it rose twenty minutes after sunset. Many people would have observed the eclipse, and its significance as a sign/omen would be more widely recognized. The moon eclipsed at the horizon would appear red



Eclipsed moonrise
December 29, 1 B.C.
Here is a similar picture
but not the actual image
because time travel is
challenging:

²⁸ A second reference uses the Ark of the Covenant, as a type of Mary. The times of the wandering of the Ark seem to correspond to the periods of Mary's life. The Holy Family lived in this house in Bethlehem, for three months, and the Ark of the Covenant remained near a threshing floor for three months, in the house of Obed Edom (2 Samuel 6:3-11). *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2676, <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/para/2676.htm>.

²⁹ There is a similar phrase 'the root of Jesse' used only in Isaiah 11:1 and 11:10 also in association with branch, so these verses might point to Jesus as His Star. It may be that some words translated branch (multiple Hebrew words) may have multiple meanings, meaning both sprout and Dayspring. For example the lamp in the Tabernacle had both branches and lights (the word in Hebrew used for stars in Genesis 1:15, 17 and Exodus 25:37).

³⁰ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XVII, 167. wesley.nnu.edu/biblical_studies/josephus/ant-17.htm. Book XVII, Chapter 6.4 Viewed as a sign in the heaven in the context of killing a leader of a sedition attempting to stop King Herod's desecration of the Temple with a golden eagle.

increasing its significance as an omen because of extinction. Josephus recorded the eclipse because it was a sign. This sign moves the death of King Herod from 4 B.C. to 1 A.D.³¹ Josephus recorded that King Herod died before Passover. Herod slew Bethlehem's babes before he died and after the magi saw the star again, after Passover 1 A.D.



The Temple officials interpreted the Scriptures to say that Passover fell on the evening of the fourteenth day of the lunar month. The Vernal equinox preceded the full moon (by Jewish reckoning, on the fifteenth day of Nisan). The Vernal equinox was on March 25, 1 A.D. The first full moon following this would be Passover. Therefore, Passover fell on Sunday, March 27, starting at sundown.

In Herod's last months, God afflicted him with unclean sores. Therefore, he may have deferred when he celebrated Passover, choosing to celebrate it one month later as permitted in the law. Herod's illness meant, Venus could first be visible on Passover, yet have Herod die before he celebrated Passover the same year. The magi visited Herod in Jerusalem and probably arrived on the tenth of Nisan. Four days before they visited the Holy Family, on Passover, but Herod, according to Josephus, died sometime before Passover.³²

God required each family to select their Passover lamb on the tenth of Nisan (Exodus 12:3). So, the magi announced the sign revealing the Lamb God selected on that date. Therefore, Herod planned to celebrate Passover on April 25 and was alive after the star of Bethlehem rose. He had the babes of Bethlehem slaughtered after the star rose (Matthew 2:10-18) but died shortly after that. Since Josephus is not Scripture and wasn't an eyewitness, he used a faulty source for an event ninety years earlier. There could be other reasons for the erroneous dating of Herod's death before Passover.

In Judah in the first century, there were different calendars in use. Groups who disagreed on when to celebrate Passover celebrated it on different days. At least two, a lunar-solar calendar used by the Sadducees and a solar calendar used by the Essenes. The gospels demonstrate this problem; Jesus celebrated Passover on one day, while others celebrated it at least one day later (Luke 22:15, John 18:28).

If Josephus got his details from a group that celebrated Passover later, the problem would be solved. Another possibility Josephus got his details wrong. There are many known errors in his writings; for instance, he placed the death of John the Baptist in 36 A.D. about four years late. If the magi arrived near Passover, Herod would be far more likely to be in Jerusalem. Second, more distractions would keep King Herod from continuously watching the magi with Passover coming that evening. There were hundreds of thousands of visitors in Jerusalem.

Joseph would be in Jerusalem for the Passover, not at home. Joseph wasn't at home when the magi arrived; the magi saw the Child and His mother Mary (Matthew 2:11). So that night, Joseph was warned in a dream to flee with Mary and the child to Egypt. Because it was Passover, there was a full moon all night to light the path for the Holy Family while they fled. Jesus was ninety-two days or three months old on that night.

³¹ John Pratt, "Yet Another Eclipse for Herod," *Planetarian*, vol. 19, no. 4, Dec. 1990, pp. 8-14. www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/herod/herod.html.

³² Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XVII, 191-213. www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-17.htm.

The Census of Quirinius

In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment when Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:1-2). Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem because of this decree. Many doubt this decree occurred because of the timing. The proposal I make has less difficulty because I place the date of King Herod the Great's death after Passover 1 A.D., so there are fewer chronological difficulties.

The *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible* proposes, the decree was an oath of allegiance to the emperor, so it was a public enrollment of subjects expressing their loyalty to the reigning emperor. It may also be, Quirinius was the administrator of the Judean census years before he became the Legate of Syria and did the census for taxation in 6 A.D.³³

Josephus is the only other source to dispute the dating of this census. Josephus is not Scripture; he made mistakes and used sources written before his parent's birth. Josephus was likely confused because he used sources that called both King Herod and his son King Herod confusing Josephus. Josephus did not realize that Quirinius and Sabinus (his ethnicity) were two ways to refer to the same person. To reconcile his sources, he changed the date of the census from the 37th of Herod to the 37th of Actium.³⁴

The necessity to return to one's city requirement was likely specific to Judah, not the empire. The final piece to this puzzle is the three requests to search the census records. God prompted the census to fix the date of Jesus' birth by three things: astronomical data, Roman records, and Scriptural evidence.

The eclipse to many appears to put the birth of Jesus four or more years earlier, while the census places His birth about four or more years after this. Those arguing for the earlier date don't successfully deal with the census date.

The Constellations Marked by the Rising of Venus

On Sunday 24 August 2 B.C., Venus rose in the constellation of Leo to mark the Lion of the tribe of Judah receiving His golden scepter. The scepter marked a Jewish King. Jesus is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5). Jesus is the King of the Jews (John 18:33-37), and He is the King of kings (Revelation 17:4, 19:16).

On March 27, 1 A.D., Venus rose in the constellation of Aries. Aries means slain Ram or Lamb. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, much as a Passover lamb would be born. John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). Lamb is one of the most common titles of Jesus in the New Testament. The Passover lambs were in their first year (not yet one-year-old Exodus 12:5). Jesus was in His first year when the magi announced His star in Jerusalem.

During Jesus' public ministry, Venus rose on 15 August 31 A.D, in the constellation of Leo. At Jesus' resurrection, Venus rose in the constellation of Pisces. Pisces represents two fish, and the link to the fisherman who led a new Church is not a coincidence. (E. W. Bullinger indicates the Hebrew name of Pisces is closely connected with growing as fish do into multitudes. Pisces

³³ *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, New Testament*, 2010, Ignatius Press, p. 109.

³⁴ John A. Rhodes, "Josephus Misdated the Census of Quirinius," JETS 54.1 (March 2011) 65–87 http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/54/54-1/JETS_54-1_65-87_Rhoads.pdf

is also connected with the mystery of the Church.).³⁵ Venus rose a few days earlier, but there were no magi to see it. Most observers wouldn't see Venus for about a week after its first appearance. With clear visibility conditions, all observers could see it by this date. Venus rose on March 19, 33 A.D.³⁶

The Position of Mercury during these Risings of Venus

During each of these risings of Venus (August 24, 2 B.C., March 27, 1 A.D., August 15, 31 A.D., and April 5, 33 A.D.), Mercury was also a morning star with Venus. God said the morning stars *sang together* while laying the earth's foundation (Job 38:4-7). It appears the morning stars sang together to announce Jesus' conception and resurrection. Another link to the ancient plan of God, the Bible says the Lamb that was slain ... *before the foundation of the world* (Revelation 13:8). The signs in the sky were in motion before God formed the earth. At the earth's creation, the planets were in orbit as a sign of the Lamb and signaled His coming in Bethlehem. God set the lights in the sky for signs (Genesis 1:14), so the sun, moon, and stars form signs from God.

Isaiah 14:12 refers to a morning star (*HALAL* or Lucifer, son of the morning (KJV)). It isn't the bright morning star; it refers to Satan; Mercury is the other morning star.

Christmas and the Birth of Jesus

In several related articles, the author discusses the date of the birth of Jesus.³⁷ The simple answer is that Jesus was born on 25 December 1 B.C. Julian; this date was confirmed by Roman census records, by the priestly course timing of Zechariah, and by astronomical signs in the sun and the moon.

The Moon Witnesses to Jesus Birth, Death, and Resurrection

Jesus was born on December 25, 1 B.C. four days later, on December 29, 1 B.C., the moon rose just after sundown partially eclipsed. An eclipsed moon at the horizon would be red, an ominous sign indeed. We have the witness of Josephus that they saw this eclipse near his birth. Jesus' crucifixion occurred on Friday, April 3, 33 A.D., after sundown on that day, the moon visible from Jerusalem rose eclipsed.

Saint Peter strongly confirmed this date by referring to a lunar eclipse the day Jesus died. He said, "The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood 'before' the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20). Peter quoted Joel 2:31. During a lunar eclipse, the moon at the horizon is often red.³⁸ Therefore, in both cases, at Jesus' birth and death, the moon was likely red when seen shortly after sundown.

Also, in the Hebrew of Joel's prophesy, the word 'before' means 'in the presence of' or 'before the face of' and there is no definite article before day of the LORD so the sun will be

³⁵ E.W. Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars*, (Kregel) pp. 93-4. philologos.org/_eb-tws/chap23.htm

³⁶ Venus rose an hour before sunrise and may have marked the moment of Jesus' resurrection.

³⁷ Bruce Killian, "Dionysius Exiguus, Got It Right," 2002, www.scripturescholar.com/DionysiusExiguus.pdf

³⁸ John Pratt, "Dating the First Easter," *The Ensign* 15, No. 6 (June 1985), pp. 59-68. www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/lds/easter/dating.html.

darkened and the moon turned to blood in the presence of a day of the LORD. Jesus' birth and death appear to be days of the LORD, and the sun and the moon witnessed events; we can check two thousand years later.

The full moon and Jupiter just rose on the eastern horizon, while the star led the Magi to the house where Jesus' lived.

The Last Supper lasted until midnight; they crossed the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives. The nearly full moon reigned, but at 3:20 AM, the moon set, so it became much darker. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus watched and prayed for three hours. The timing is quite precise for a population without clocks. Jesus said to those arresting him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53). So those arresting Jesus waited until the moon set to arrest Jesus.³⁹ They did this because Jesus had escaped many attempts to arrest Him, the cohort of soldiers (about 600 men) surrounded and attempted to surprise Jesus in the darkness.

At Jesus' resurrection, the moon again was full. Shortly before dawn, the moon was at the horizon in the west. It was under the woman's feet (Virgo, the only female constellation the moon passes through), similar in circumstance to Revelation 12:1-2. In this instance, Virgo's head pointed down in worship.

Shepherds in the Field by Night

According to the Mishnah (Jewish oral law recorded c. 200 A.D.), sacrificial lambs had to be born within the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem, with the maximum distance being a mile or so south of Bethlehem. The chief priests specified that male lambs born within the set boundary and without defect were Temple sacrifices. The Passover sacrifice was one kind. Jesus, born under the Law, apparently kept this non-Biblical law.

Migdal Eder translated Tower of the Flock is mentioned in Genesis 35:19-21 with the death of Rachael on the way to Bethlehem. It also marked the approximate limit where animals born would automatically be designated as sacrificial animals. This tower could be where the shepherds told of Jesus' birth were located.

Many argue Jesus' birth could not have been in December because it would be too cold and wet for the shepherds to remain in the fields. This argument falls apart when one understands Levite shepherds in Jerusalem's vicinity were required to stay there year-round to provide sacrifices for the daily needs of the Temple.⁴⁰ Bethlehem's climate is generally mild, and snow is very infrequent.

A baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger was a 'sign' to these shepherds—their job description included certifying potential sacrifices were without defect. The shepherds visited to certify the Lamb of God was without blemish, as required by the law. In the days of Jesus, one could not bring a lamb from one's flock. One needed to purchase a sacrificial lamb from the Temple flocks. We can know it had never broken a bone.

The star of Bethlehem rose to mark the first anniversary of Jesus' conception. He was conceived on Passover and revealed by the star of Bethlehem on Passover. The scepter in Leo

³⁹ Bruce Killian, "The Chronology of Jesus' Life," 2020, pp. 44-45, <https://tinyurl.com/y5oth3qy>

⁴⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Book 2, Eerdmans, 1953, pp. 186-187. www.philologos.org/_eb-lat/.

marked by Venus appeared about one year before the birth of John the Baptist. The scepter was a sign timed to herald the birth of the one who would prepare the way for our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴¹

The Sun Witnesses to Jesus Life

Because Jesus' birthday was December 25, we can observe new insights. Throughout Jesus' lifetime, December 25 was the winter solstice. The winter solstice marks the longest night of the year and when days get longer. The Romans later celebrated the solstice as the birthday of the sun. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). God prepared the Roman world to celebrate this day. The sun dawned on the day the Son dawned. The sun played a part in each of these signs. The sun 'clothes' (Revelation 12:5) all of these astronomical events because they occur immediately before sunrise, or in the case of the moon, after sunset. Also, all planets shine by reflected sunlight.

Jesus was born during the night, and the shepherds visited him during the night. It was the longest night of the year, and Jesus is the light of the world. No day better symbolizes His role of coming into the world to be the light of the world. Another Scripture links the sun and righteousness, "But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings" (Malachi 4:2). The sun is the primary source of light to the earth. Without the sun, our planet would be dead. Without the sun, our world would have no life; without Jesus, we have no life.

Genesis 1:14 says the first purpose of the lights, referring to the sun, moon, and stars, is to be for signs. The sun, moon, and the brightest stars were signs witnessing to the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of the great light (Matthew 4:16). There are hints that the night of Jesus' birth was overcast, as well as being the solstice. Luke says after the angel announced to the shepherds, suddenly, a multitude of the heavenly host was visible. This host likely referred to angels and stars. The clouds cleared, giving the shepherds some light to find their way to Jesus.

Many incorrectly assume Rome chose the date of Christmas because of the Roman god Sol Invictus. Hippolytus of Rome (c. 202-211 A.D.) spoke of Christmas before the cult and festival of Dies Natalis Solis Invicti developed (c. 274 A.D.).

Clouds Witness to Jesus' Life

Why did the star disappear over Jesus' house? A little humidity was all it took, an invisible cloud behind His house. Joel 2:31 not only associates the sun darkening and the moon turning to blood but also to clouds, and Saint Peter refers to this (Acts 2:20-21). Clouds likely played a part in the signs in the heavens at Jesus' birth, the magi's coming, the heavenly signs at the start of His ministry, and His death and resurrection. To this, we can add His transfiguration. So that Christmas was darker yet because clouds obscured the sky.

The Heavens Worship Jesus

We are commanded not to worship the lights in the heavens. Beware lest you lift your eyes to heaven. When you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn

⁴¹ Prediction one year before the birth of a miraculous son occurs several other times in the Bible, Genesis 17:21, 18:10-14; 2 Kings 4:16-17. See also "The Chronology of Jesus' Life" <http://www.scripturescholar.com/ChronologyJesus.pdf>.

away and worship them and serve them, things the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven (Deuteronomy 4:19). The heavenly bodies are allotted to the peoples by being lights and day after day giving glory to God, but they can worship. Since God gives the dream and its interpretation, we learn heavenly bodies can worship Him. Joseph had a dream where the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down to worship him (Genesis 37:11).

How could the sun, moon, and stars bow before Joseph or Jesus? If the sun were visible, the eleven stars would not be visible, so the sun bowed by hiding itself (but coloring the sky), either in an eclipse⁴² or below the horizon. I propose the sun, moon, and stars bowed before Jesus by hiding their light while revealing their presence. A second way they bow is by being low to the ground on the horizon. It also appears that they bow by being at the feet of the one they worship.

In most cases, when the planets or a constellation form a sign mentioned in this article, the stars were as low in the sky as they could be and still be seen. The duration of their visibility was short. When the stars formed a scepter in the constellation of Leo, the planets were low in the sky, as low as they could go and still be barely visible. Extinction reddened and dimmed their light.

When the sunlight played a part in the sign, it hid its light (or Venus was a competitor). At Jesus' birth, it was the winter solstice, so the sun's light was at a minimum, and it was at midnight, so the sun hid its light for the maximum length of time. At Jesus' death, God hid the sun's light from noon when it was usually at its strongest.

The earth can only eclipse the moon when it is full. The moon bowed to worship in two of these signs by being eclipsed. So the sun and moon bowed in their strength. The moon was only briefly visible on the horizon. In both cases, the earth partially eclipsed the moon. (At the time of Christ's death, (3 PM) the moon was fully eclipsed, but it was not yet visible above the horizon in Jerusalem). When the moon did reveal itself, it was just above the horizon after sundown.

Interestingly, God kept the order first. The sun darkened, then the moon turned to blood in each instance (rather than moon then sun). The sun, moon, and stars did not shine at both His birth and death. They did reveal their presence after He was born and after He died.

Joseph's dream links the sun to his father, the moon to his mother, and the stars to his brothers. Jesus, as the most important Son, is represented by the brightest of the Stars.

Jesus referred to Himself as the Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15). Psalm 19:4-5 refers to the sun as a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber. It appears that when God darkened the sun during Jesus' crucifixion, the sun represented Jesus as being in His bridal chamber. When Jesus said, "It is finished" (*TETELESTAI*, Τετέλεσται) or it is consummated; He consummated His marriage covenant with the church. Afterward, the sun as the bridegroom came forth from its chamber.

In the Bible, red or scarlet represents sin or uncleanness. Though your sins be as scarlet, you shall be white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). When a woman gave birth to a son, she was unclean. So the moon appeared to be unclean after the birth of Jesus. When a husband and wife consummated their marriage, both were unclean until the evening, so the redness of the moon indicated consummation.

It is a reasonable conjecture the sun and the moon worshipped Jesus, witnessed His birth, and

⁴² A solar eclipse is like twilight, not night so only a few of the brightest stars can be seen without optical aid.

announced it. Now Jesus did not become unclean at His birth or death, but remained holy, see the “Immaculate Conception.”⁴³ So if there were any doubt, God had the sun and moon witness twice to Jesus, and they worshiped Him.

Another way the heavens worship Jesus is they allow us to discover the glory of His creation. The apparent size in the sky of the sun and the moon are nearly equal, which is unique to our planet in our solar system. Since the sun and the moon can eclipse each other, God greatly aided our discovery and understanding of our universe.⁴⁴

The Conception of Jesus

Luke 1:26-39 records the conception of Jesus in Nazareth. Jesus was conceived on Passover Wednesday 7 April 1 B.C. Scripture says Jesus’ conception occurred at midnight. “For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, the all-powerful word leaped from heaven, from the royal throne, into the midst of the land that was doomed” (Wisdom 18:14). The preceding verses link this event with the Passover.

Midnight means Mary kept the Passover watch, commanded for all Israelites (Exodus 12:42). Mary left in haste for Zechariah and Elizabeth’s home, so she left that night. On that night, before dawn, Venus was high and bright, Mercury was bright, and they were together in the constellation of Pisces. Thirty-three years later, Jesus and his disciples kept this watch in the garden of Gethsemane. Mary conceived Jesus, so He had come, while His star was still the morning star, before His star had departed as Genesis 49:9-10 predicted and required.

Elizabeth revealed her pregnancy at Passover when she chose to stay home because she was pregnant. She kept it hidden for five months but revealed her pregnancy when she didn’t go to Jerusalem for Passover. Because we know, the angel Gabriel came to Bethlehem in Elizabeth’s sixth month. It was early in her sixth month because Jesus was born four months and one day after John the Baptist.⁴⁵ One can determine this date from the priestly course of Abijah to which Zechariah belonged. These courses did not reset as many believe each year but continued to rotate, as seen from the priestly cycle records in the Dead Sea scrolls.⁴⁶

In a separate article, I detail the signs in the sky, revealing the earliest possible conception date of the child Jesus. Briefly, God tells much of the story of Esther in the sky, from August 13, 2 B.C. until August 29, 2 B.C. Esther is the Persian word for Venus, and the king extends his vertical golden scepter toward Esther. The earliest conception would be the last night of Venus as the evening star so eight days before the heliacal rising. This story also reveals God’s control over the visibility of the signs in the sky as needed to tell the story. See “Esther and the King’s Golden Scepter,” <http://www.scripturescholar.com/EstherScepter.pdf>.

⁴³ Bruce Killian, “The Immaculate Conception,” 2008, <http://www.scripturescholar.com/ImmaculateConception.pdf>

⁴⁴ “Our Privileged Planet, The Search for Purpose in the Universe” one hour video, <http://vimeo.com/8361588>

⁴⁵ Bruce Killian, “The Immaculate Conception,” 2008, <http://www.scripturescholar.com/ImmaculateConception.pdf>

⁴⁶ Bruce Killian, “Dionysius Exiguus, Got It Right,” 2002, www.scripturescholar.com/DionysiusExiguus.pdf

The Start of Jesus' Ministry

John alludes to a dramatic sign in the heavens (John 1:51) inaugurating Jesus' ministry. He told His disciples, "Amen, Amen I tell you soon you all shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." The next evening March 4, 31 A.D., they saw the sign as they returned to Galilee.

The clouds parted to reveal a ladder, formed by all visible wandering stars, evenly spaced in a straight line, reaching from the earth to the center of the sky with Venus marking the constellation of the lamb. John had just pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God, and to make straight the way of the Lord, Jesus is the straight way to heaven⁴⁷. The ladder was probably also crossed by a cloud, which it rested against, making it look like a cross. It appears God hung the constellation of Aires on the cross. See www.scripturescholar.com/LambofGod.pdf for a complete description. This event happened when Jesus was thirty, shortly after His forty-day fast, that preceded His public ministry. Age thirty was when a person took priestly or kingly office in Israel.

Planetary Visibility

Venus and the planets in the scepter would be beyond the limit of visibility 'today.' There has been an increase in light pollution, moisture, and particles in the air. Venus' visibility is affected by clouds, the latitude, the total astronomical extinction coefficient, Venus' magnitude, the magi's visual acuity, the azimuth difference,⁴⁸ and the number of particles in the air. Programs to determine a planet's heliacal rising use average visibility. Visibility can vary a lot and is not an exact science. The sun is closest and therefore brightest on January 3 and most distant and dimmest on July 4. On August 24, it would be about 5% below maximum brightness.

The magi viewed the star of Bethlehem under ideal conditions. God, who placed the planets in orbit before the world's foundation, controlled the weather and visibility of these planets. The magi saw the sign. "The calculation of visibility phenomena is plagued by uncertainties that will only be resolved by a body of reliable observations that does not yet exist."⁴⁹ Besides extinction, three other factors affect visibility, the amount of light from earthbound sources (which dilutes the light), the amount of moisture (which scatters the light), and the number of particles (which absorb the light). The magi observed this sign long before light pollution. The humidity was minimal; they were long before autos and contrails added moisture to the atmosphere. They lived long before industry increased the amount of particulate matter in the air.

God organized the picture so that the brightest planets were closest to the horizon and would still be seen. The planets all had similar visibility because extinction reduced the lowest planets visibility more, except Mars' red color is less absorbed.

Besides the weather, God also controlled solar/cosmic weather. The Forbush decrease refers to the reduction in cosmic rays due to the sun's activity. The decrease in cosmic rays dramatically clears the earth's atmosphere of particles, further increasing visibility. The Forbush

⁴⁷ Bruce Killian, "The Ladder to Heaven—The Lamb of God," 2006, www.scripturescholar.com/LambofGod.pdf.

⁴⁸ Victor Reijjs, "Extinction angle and heliacal events" pp. 5-6, <http://www.iol.ie/~geniet/eng/extinction.htm>.

⁴⁹ Planet, Lunar and Stellar Visibility, www.alcyone.de.

decrease events occur sporadically with no apparent pattern. Venus' visibility at Jesus' resurrection was much more visible, so it did not need magi to see Venus at this time.

The Nations Carefully Watched the Rising of Venus

Both the Babylonians and Maya tracked and recorded many years of the various phases of Venus. Both groups recorded the invisibility phase at the inferior conjunction as lasting seven or eight days.⁵⁰ Modern recorders set this period as being about twelve to fourteen days, which means that we can no longer see the heliacal rise of Venus with the clarity of the ancients. Today Venus is not considered visible for about the last three days before it drops below the horizon and for the first three days after it rises above the horizon. The Maya and the Babylonians recorded Venus on the last day before it set and the first day after it rose. Whatever the extinction coefficient was, the magi could see these signs.



Venus Tablets of Assisaduqa⁵¹

Dresden Codex Venus Table

⁵⁰ "The Dresden Codex Venus Table,"

George Sarton, *Ancient Science Through the Golden Age of Greece*, 1993, p.77-8

<https://tinyurl.com/y8jkeu8q>, "on the 25th of Tammuz Venus disappeared in the west for 7 days remaining absent in the sky, and on the 2nd of Ab Venus was seen in the east"

⁵¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_tablet_of_Ammisaduqa.

Summary

The heavens declare the glory of God to all (Psalms 19:1). The sun, moon, clouds, fixed and wandering stars announced His glory. The stars announced that the conception of His glorious Son would soon occur. The sun and moon gave Him glory by diminishing themselves when He was born and died. The signs uniquely identified Jesus as the One for whom God placed them when the magi arrived at His house.

God made pictures in the sky that everyone could interpret. One doesn't have to be a professional astrologer to interpret them, but one must observe them. One did have to connect these signs to a specific Bible passage to interpret them. Venus rose in the constellation of Leo on 24 August 2 B.C. Julian, preceding the birth of John the Baptist by about one year. This sign, the golden scepter in the lion, announced the King.

Venus rose in the constellation of Aries on March 27, 1 A.D.; it marked the first anniversary of Jesus' conception. From before dawn until early evening, Venus was visible. Twenty-four minutes after sunset, it stood over His house and waited for the magi to arrive, then it faded from sight. This sign announced the Lamb of God.

On April 5, 33 A.D., Venus rose in Pisces and coincided with Jesus' resurrection. This sign announced the Church comes. A second picture in the sky in the early evening of Sunday, March 4, 31 A.D., at the start of Jesus' ministry, announced Him as the Lamb of God, the Way to heaven, and foreshadowed the crucifixion of the Lamb.

The morning stars witnessed the foundation of the earth. God's plan to redeem us was in progress before Adam walked the earth. Will you ever look at the sky with the same casualness again? Our epoch starts on Sunday, January 1, 1 A.D., the day Jesus was named and circumcised, the day Jesus entered the family of God. Every time you date something, you are witnessing the birth of the Son of God.

This sign was unique, a bright vertical scepter at dawn between the feet of Lion of Judah at a heliacal rising of Venus with the brightest stars near the horizon where extinction was the greatest. 1.6 years later, that same star guided the magi in Bethlehem by waiting for them while there was enough light to walk to the precise house Jesus lived in safely. No angel was necessary, no horoscopes, and no strange interpretations. God guided the magi as only He could to His Son. It has taken over two millennia for humanity to figure out how God led the magi. Only the creator could craft the parts of the sign and reveal His glory.

Timeline of Events (All dates Julian)

(JD Julian Day number)

August 20, 2 B.C.	Fri	Scepter forms in Leo	JD 1720923.5
August 24, 2 B.C.	Sun	Venus marks picture of a scepter in Leo	JD 1720927.5
August 28, 2 B.C.	Thu	Golden scepter extended to Esther	JD 1720931.5
April 6, 1 B.C.	Tue	Jesus conceived—Passover midnight	JD 1721153.5
August 24, 1 B.C.	Tue	John the Baptist born	JD 1721293.5
December 25, 1 B.C.	Sun	Jesus born—Winter solstice	JD 1721416.5
January 1, 1 A.D.	Sun	Jesus circumcised	JD 1721425.5
February 3, 1 A.D.	Fri	Jesus Presented in the Temple	
March 22, 1 A.D.	Wed	Magi visit Herod in Jerusalem (Nisan 10)	JD 1721503.5
March 27, 1 A.D.	Sun	Magi see the star of Bethlehem Passover	JD 1721508.5

		(Nisan 14), The follow it on Nisan 15	
August 30, A.D.		Start of the ministry of John the Baptist	
January 8, 31 A.D.	Mon	Jesus' baptism by John	JD 1732387.5
March 4, 31 A.D.	Sun	Picture—Ladder to Heaven—Lamb of God	JD 1732442.5
April 3, 33 A.D.	Fri	Jesus' Crucifixion—Moon turned to blood	JD 1733203.5
April 5, 33 A.D.	Sun	Jesus' Resurrection	JD 1733205.5

Pictures of Jesus Presented

- “The Good Shepherd” was inspected by good shepherds; Levites certified Jesus was without defect.
- “The Light of the World” was born on the festival of lights and the day the Sun was born.
- “The Bread of Life” was born in the house of bread (Bethlehem). He presented Himself as food in a manger. But He was found near a threshing floor, so the grain needed threshing.
- The magi discovered “The Lamb of God” in a sheep town by a star marking the constellation of the lamb. Selected as the Passover Lamb but found too late to be offered that year.
- “The Bright Morning Star” led the magi to Jesus, and they found the Bright Morning Star on the day the Bright Morning Star was born.
- “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah” had come to receive His scepter of world rule.
- The Lamb Crucified as the Ladder or Stairway to Heaven.
- The Great Light in the Darkness rose to be a light in the day.
- The Great Light waited over Jesus’ house for the gentiles who sought the light.
- Sacrifice, a manger, was also the stall where one fattened a sacrifice before being offered.

Epilogue: Our Lady of Guadalupe

Before dawn on the winter solstice, December 12, 1531 A.D. Venus rose just before sunrise. Venus formed a line of planets low in the eastern sky with Mercury and Jupiter, a sign of kingly authority or rule. Virgo (Virgin) was in the center of the sky.

The magi climbed the hill to the west to find Mary and Jesus’ house. Juan Diego climbed Tepeyac hill to the west⁵² (the opposite side from his other encounters with Mary). Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego. She left her image on his tilma (a serape-like outer garment). Three astronomical signs marking Jesus’ birth, the winter solstice, and the rising of Venus⁵³ with Mercury in a line of three stars just before dawn marked the Blessed Virgin Mother’s appearance. The image shows many stars present in that sky on Mary’s mantle.

As the resurrection was the critical event in the evangelization of the world, Mary’s appearance was the critical event in the evangelism of the New World. Mary’s hands were folded in prayer, and her words always pointed to Jesus. The tilma is the only tangible ‘relic’ of Mary. Mary’s image on the rough cactus fiber cloth is detailed. It allows with magnification the image

⁵² Jesus’ final journey to Golgotha was also up a hill to the west, with the daystar over head, and he would encounter His mother Mary.

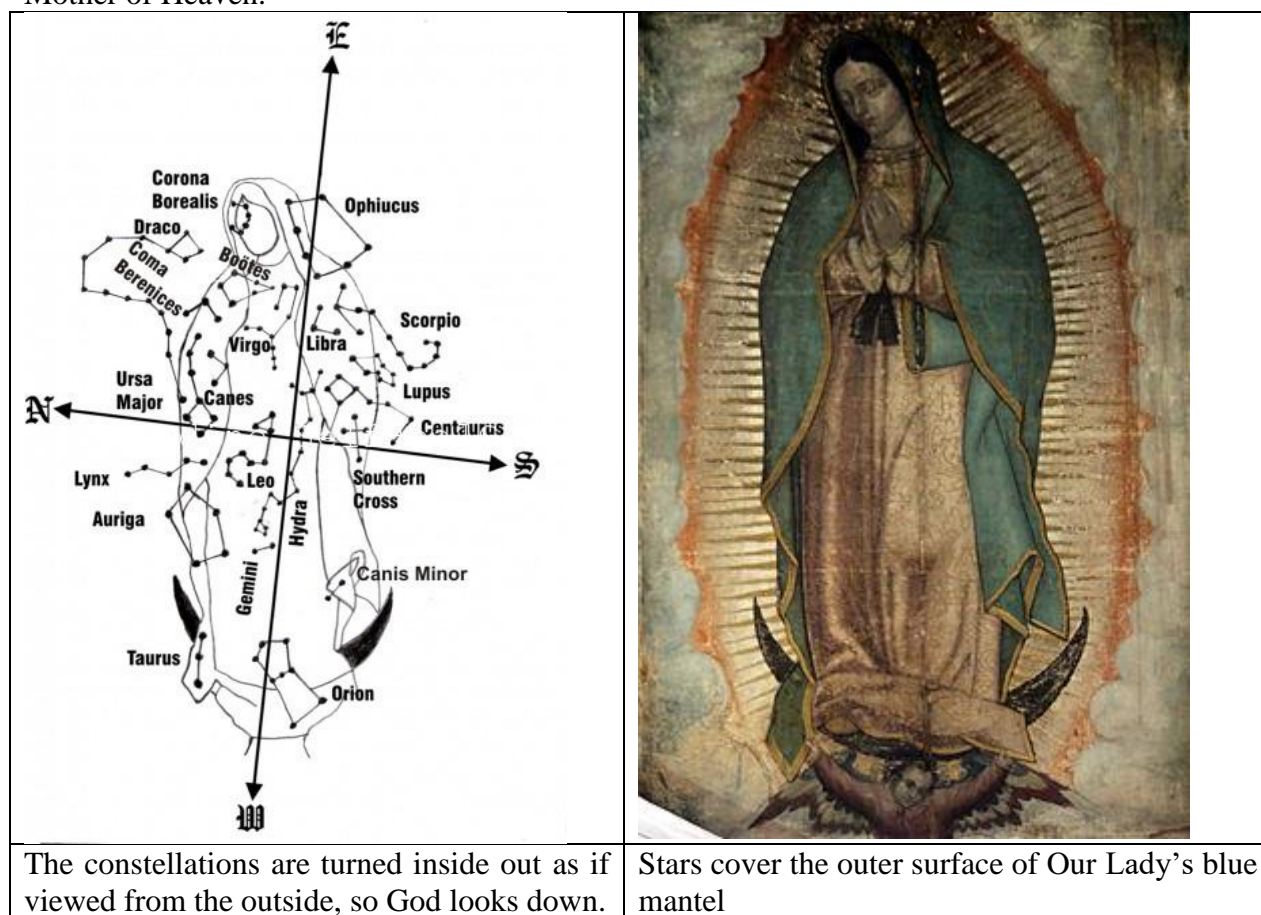
⁵³ Note in this case, Venus has been the morning star, and this is the last day it will appear as the bright morning star.

of the group who were presented the flowers by St. Juan Diego to be seen in Mary's eyes.⁵⁴

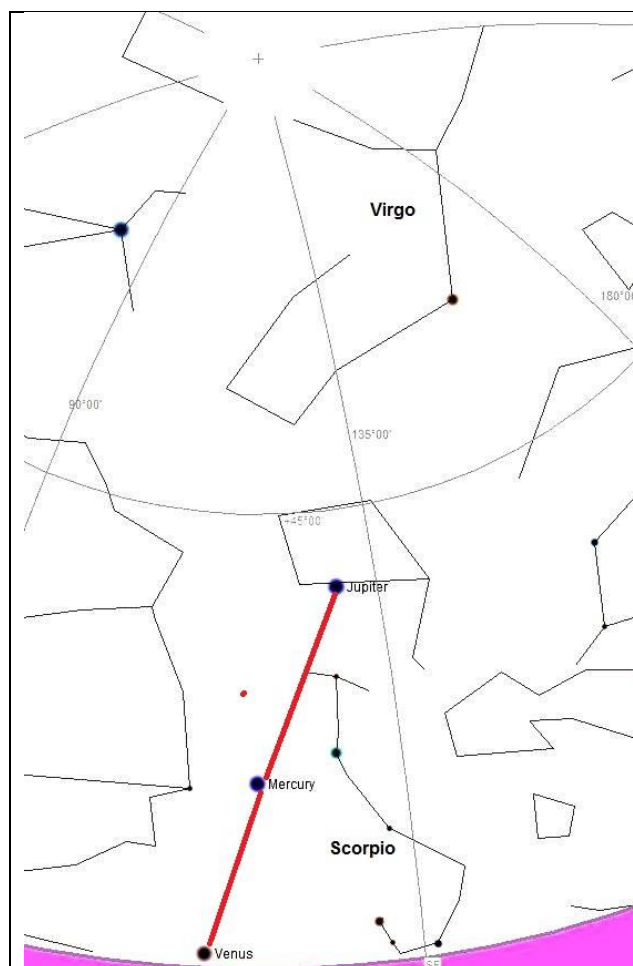
The signs established by God before He made our world link the star of Bethlehem with Mary's visit to Mexico City over fifteen hundred years later. These signs show that God had the sun, moon, and stars honoring Mary as Our Lady of Guadalupe because Mary eclipsed the sun, was over the moon, and was crowned with the stars.

A woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, Mary's visit resulted in the conversion of Mexico. It allowed the Church to grow even as it lost members in Europe due to the Protestant Reformation. There were three thousand converts baptized daily for ten years. Now that was a revival.

A thought on the days of the year chosen for Christmas and Our Lady of Guadalupe's feast. Christmas is always 12/25, twelve is the number of government or rule, and five is the number of grace, so 12/25 is "rule by grace multiplied." 12/12 is "government." Mary rules as the Queen Mother of Heaven.



⁵⁴Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, *A Handbook on Guadalupe*, 1997, pp 1, 68-71, 80, 89-91. Similar www.jkmi.com/ologimage.htm.



The eastern sky before dawn, December 12, 1531 A.D.⁵⁵ The line of three planets (Venus, Mercury, and Jupiter) marked by the rising of Venus on the day The Blessed Virgin Mary left her picture on the tilma of St. Juan Diego. The scepter is extended to the Virgin, giving Mary the authority to intercede for the world.

While Venus rose with the sun, this is not the first day of morning visibility, but the last day, Venus was visible in the morning. It was the winter solstice.

For Further Research

The author has written a second article that looks at this subject briefly www.scripturescholar.com/StarOfBethlehem.htm. There are three YouTube presentations linked at the top of this article. I have a manuscript expanding this information in better order and detail <http://www.scripturescholar.com/StarBook.pdf>.

The author has an article that details the whole life and ministry of Jesus. It includes many signs in the heavens of Jesus' life. See www.scripturescholar.com/ChronologyJesus.pdf. This article shows practically every aspect of Jesus' life and ministry connected to Passover, not just Jesus' conception and flight into Egypt.

Not all star of Bethlehem theories can answer the facts the Bible presents about this star. See <http://www.scripturescholar.com/StarOfBethlehemNotes.pdf> for a list of answers that star must be able to provide.

For the great sign that marked the beginning of Jesus' Ministry see The Ladder to Heaven —

⁵⁵ Chart by Cartes du Ciel, www.astrosurf.com/astropec.

The Lamb of God <http://www.scripturescholar.com/LambofGod.pdf>

For a fuller understanding of the woman and the dragon in Revelation 12, see <http://www.scripturescholar.com/ApocalypseKey.htm>.

For a fuller understanding of how God varies visibility to tell His stories, see “Esther and the King’s Golden Scepter,” <http://www.scripturescholar.com/EstherScepter.htm> .pdf

Problems with other star of Bethlehem theories

The most popular estimates of what the star of Bethlehem was, attempt to identify it with various conjunctions of the planets with each other or with a star. All references in the Bible to the star of Bethlehem refer to a single star, not to stars. Others recognizing this problem identify the star of Bethlehem with a single star, often Jupiter or Regulus, one of the stars in the conjunction or with an occultation of a star. The translation of “we saw his star in the east,” literally translated, is we saw his star at its rising (but the rising always occurred in the east). The risings of the stars they cite are not heliacal.

King Herod killed all the boys in Bethlehem two years of age and under, which fits well with the 1.6-year (584 days synodic) period of Venus. Jesus did not have to be born at the sign because King Herod understood from the magi, the Messiah had to be born before the star rose again, as Jesus was.

The oft-proposed stopping of a planet over Bethlehem, as seen from Jerusalem due to the retrograde motion of a planet, cannot be what the magi saw. They already knew they were to go to Bethlehem. King Herod sent them there; they did not need an additional sign to go to Bethlehem. They needed guidance in Bethlehem to let them know which child was born to rule as king forever. Jesus, like Moses, was hidden because He was born in a perilous time. The daystar rose in the east before dawn and disappeared over a house in the west after sunset. The sign they saw marked the house they were to visit.

Why would Mary and Jesus hide? The shepherds were told, *born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord* (Luke 2:11), and they spread this message (Luke 2:17). If Mary had not hidden Jesus, then all of Bethlehem and later all of Israel would have shown up at their door, and Herod would surely have slain Jesus.

So when the shepherds left the cave where Jesus lay in a manger, the Holy family left and went into hiding, maybe setting up a tent where they would build or repair a house in which to live. Shepherds at the time of Jesus’ birth were perceived to be perpetual liars. They barred shepherds from testifying in court because they assumed they would lie. Since the report came from shepherds of the birth of Christ the Lord, if they could not find Jesus and His parents queried, the news would die out rather than grow. So we can tell that the holy family hid and avoided the danger publicity would bring.⁵⁶ This reason is similar to why there was no room at the inn. If any trustworthy witness to Jesus’ birth were known, King Herod would have heard and killed Jesus almost as soon as He was born.

A general problem with all other star of Bethlehem theories is that they don’t advance our knowledge and or understanding of God. God controls the brightness and period of the planets and the fixed stars. He controls the terrestrial weather and solar weather. To a greater or lesser

⁵⁶ This reveals there was no midwife at Jesus’ birth because she could indentify the holy family.

extent, most depend on astrology, which the Bible condemns as an offense punishable by death. How could God condemn one for astrology and honor another for using the same black art?

The theory on the star presented here also links Jesus' early life to the Jewish calendar. It clarifies the meaning of several obscure passages. This star of Bethlehem proposal reveals a concise telling of the gospel in the sky, something only the Almighty can pull off. Jesus' star is the great light that shines in the darkness, and the light is a regular theme in the Bible.

Michael R. Molnar, an astronomer in *The Star of Bethlehem; Legacy of the Magi*, said the magi did not see the star Jupiter as it rose but calculated it because the moon occulted Jupiter. Matthew says the magi said we "saw" his star rise. If the moon occulted the star, they could not see it.

A second problem with his theory is the magi needed to know Roman astrology to interpret it. The magi came from the east, outside the Roman empire. Molnar has a long section on interpreting Roman horoscopes, not something that the Scriptures or Christianity can condone. Jupiter is the largest planet but not the brightest or most important star to the ancients.

Ernest L. Martin, in *The Star that Astonished the World*, Second ed. 1996, presented a series of nine conjunctions. The most significant was a very close conjunction of Jupiter and Venus on June 17, 2 B.C. This conjunction has become a staple of star of Bethlehem theories; there are several problems. The sign was in the western evening sky, not the morning heliacal rising event. The magi said we saw his star as it rose in the east. He also notes the triple conjunction of Jupiter with the brightest star in Leo called Regulus. See <http://www.askelm.com/star/index.asp>

Fredrick Larson has presented the most widely accepted theory of the star of Bethlehem. He has made an excellent video, *The Star of Bethlehem*,⁵⁷ to back up his argument. He's a lawyer (not an astronomer or Biblical scholar). He does an excellent job of "selling" the misidentification of the Star of Bethlehem. His presentation is essentially a Hollywood version of Martin's theory. Fredrick glosses over many things, which would weaken his theory. He identifies the Star of Bethlehem as Jupiter. He notes Jupiter is the largest of the planets, but it is the second most bright, and the ancients considered Venus as the closest and most important because it was the brightest.

His theory has phases: conception happened when Venus and Jupiter came near each other. A months-long shallow loop (crowning) by Jupiter near Regulus indicated His kingship. Virgo in the daytime sky gave birth on Rosh Hashanah. Their guidance from Jerusalem to Bethlehem because Jupiter paused as it changed direction.

He sees the king of the Jews identified in a month-long shallow loop of Jupiter near Regulus, the king star in the constellation of Leo. It does not "crown" this star but very shallow loops near it as it appears to loop like a Spirograph drawing continuously in the sky. The magi saw at a point in time, the star rise, not a month wait (while Jupiter passed reversed, passes reversed, and passed again).

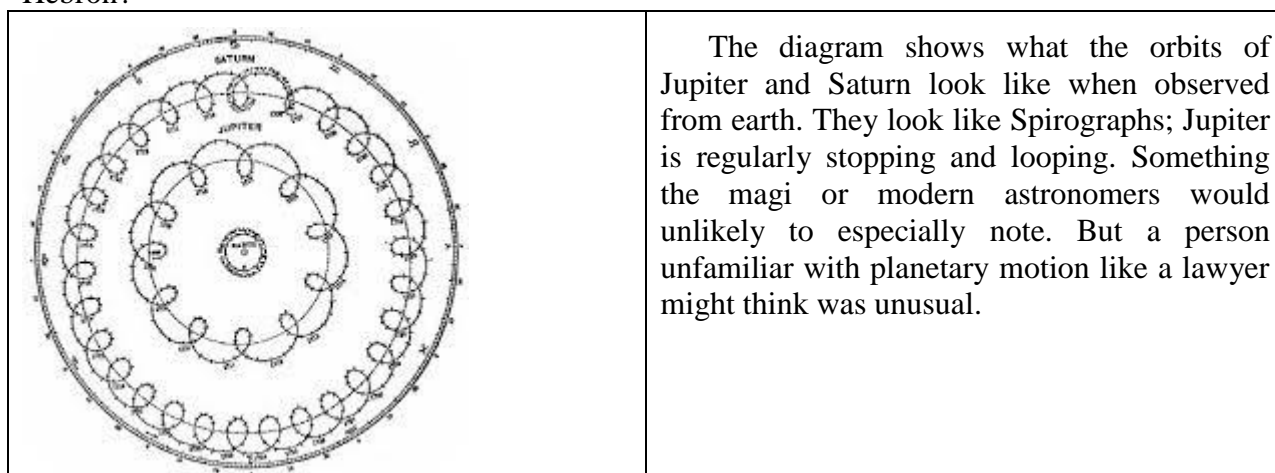
He then observed a close conjunction of Venus and Jupiter to indicate the conception of Jesus. He claims this conjunction was the brightest star anyone had ever seen (but these stars didn't touch for someone with normal vision. Venus, near its inferior conjunction, is brighter

⁵⁷ Fredrick Larson, www.bethlehemstar.net, CD available for purchase.

than Venus and Jupiter at that time together, as indicated by its daytime visibility. Finally, he saw a link between the woman in Revelation 12 giving birth. Still, he fails to mention this happens each year and wasn't visible because it was daytime. The Scripture says they saw the star as it rose with the sun, a heliacal rising 'en te anatole' not just a rising anatello.

He further presents the star guiding the magi to Bethlehem when Herod had already sent them there two months earlier. They knew Bethlehem was where they were to go, but not how to identify which of the boys in Bethlehem was the newborn king. Jupiter stopping, he mentions, is something Jupiter does twice each year. See figure below (and happened twice in the "crowning of Regulus." If Jupiter was His star, why didn't Regulus crown Jupiter rather than vice versa? If it was easy to find Jesus in Bethlehem, why the necessity of killing all boys under two years old? To protect her baby, every mother in town would likely point out Jesus if they could. It was not easy because both Jesus and Moses' mother hid them. When He moved from the cave, no one knew where He went.

The stopping of Jupiter is when it reverses and goes into retrograde motion. It doesn't point to Bethlehem; one can't visually determine when it occurs, visually you can't, and when during the night, how do you follow the star? How does one know it is not further south, perhaps in Hebron?



Jupiter crowns one star and then stops in its retrograde motion over Bethlehem. This logic crowns many stars and indicates many locations, so this retrograde motion does not make sense. Jupiter "crowns" Regulus about every 83 years.

Colin R. Nicholl, a biblical scholar in *The Great Christ Comet: Revealing the True Star of Bethlehem*, proposes that the star of Bethlehem was a great comet, but there is no record of this comet, so his entire theory is conjecture, with no observational support. His proposed comet was visible during the day. It guides south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, so his proposal has two flaws. He does propose that the comet looked like a scepter and was in the night sky between 8 and 6 B.C. Because it is conjecture, we learn nothing about the timing of this star's first or second appearance. His speculative comet is too early for the correct date of Jesus' death Passover eve 33 A.D.

An Angel or a Miracle—many believe the star that guided the magi was simply a miracle or an angel (and angels are occasionally called stars). The Bible called the Star of Bethlehem a star. Today we live at a time that airplanes and helicopters fly overhead all the time. God could have

done this, but why say a star guided them rather than an angel. Matthew is careful to differentiate between angels and stars. Can an angel heliacally rise, maybe but not predictably, so how would the magi know when to arrive to be ready to see it happen the second time?

It is clear from the information presented in this article that God was able from the foundation of the world to use the lights He set in the sky as signs to guide the magi. I believe that most, who hold this view, do not recognize the unique attributes of the planet Venus and how well it fits the requirements necessary to guide the magi. Many people could see Venus, but it was faint. One would only see it if they paid close attention; only the magi did so.

Why would the Designer use an angel to guide the magi when He could show off His divine capability and use Venus? If an angel guided the magi, why did not many curious people follow, and a crowd arrived at the house of Mary and Jesus? Using a planet, we can know the year, the day of the year, the time between the star's first and second rise, the time between Jesus' birth, and the second rise. Venus allows us to know the location of Jesus', David's, and Boaz' houses millennia after they died. All of these things would be impossible with an angel guiding the magi. We would also not see the heavens bowing to worship Jesus. Most theories do not make these connections.

Why did Jesus call Himself the bright morning star, if not to help us link it to what the magi called his star?

Nazareth or Bethlehem?

Luke 2:39 says, When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their town of Nazareth. Therefore, some say the magi came to Nazareth. The return to Nazareth occurred after forty days because Jesus needed to be circumcised and later presented at the Temple when He was forty days old.

Those holding this view don't realize the Law says The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers, you must listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15). Since Jesus was the prophet like Moses, to be like Moses, there were additional requirements for Him, according to the Law, because there had to be similarities between Moses and Jesus. Both Moses and Jesus were born under foreign rule, and both had their lives threatened as babies by a king. Moses fled from Goshen to Egypt to save his life when he was three months old. Jesus escaped from Judah to Egypt when He was three months old to save His life. In both cases, other boys did die.

Moses and Israel left Egypt suddenly on Passover night. Jesus, Mary, and Joseph left for Egypt suddenly on Passover night. In both cases, after the king and all who sought the child's life had died, they returned to their home country. Matthew 2:15 quotes Hosea 11:1, referring to Exodus 4:22 Out of Egypt I have called my son. Since the Law places a few more requirements on the one like Moses, Jesus needed to fulfill a few additional requirements before they returned to Nazareth. So after they returned from Egypt, they returned to Nazareth.

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all *peoples*, nations, and languages should serve [worship, pay reverence to] him; his dominion is an *everlasting dominion*, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.