

A Star at Christmas

This Autumn I have been following the stars (actually planets) as they have progressed across the sky. I need to get out my eyepiece on my telescope to be able to see them more clearly and more close up. What I have seen has been rather impressive, as since September I have traced Jupiter and Saturn across the southern sky, and see Mars rise in the eastern sky, each evening. As these planets appear just about dusk, before the real stars appear in the night sky, it's amazing how bright they appear, and with Mars, how orangish-red it seems. Soon Jupiter and Saturn will appear very close together, in a conjunction that make them seem as one bright star. Some believe this is similar to what happened when Jesus was born. Noted astronomer Johannes Kepler in 1614 indicated that Saturn and Jupiter had three conjunctions in 7 BC, though others believe that the Star of Bethlehem was a supernatural appearance, as it seems strange that few others if any noticed this peculiar happening in the sky.

1. The Star indicates that *Jesus is the universal Christ* (Matthew 2:1-2). The wise men or Magi likely were Gentiles. The Babylonians or Chaldeans had received the Biblical witness of the Gospel in the time of Daniel and his friends during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. They were familiar with Old Testament history and prophecy. They tied this knowledge in with their observations of the sky, and believed that the star they saw in the west was an indicator of some great occurrence for the Jewish people.

Yet here they come to Jerusalem—the center of the Jewish religion—and come to worship this new King. This says that the Saviour was for them, too. The Gospel was not merely for the Jews. The Messiah was not just for the people of Israel. In fact, the initial prophecy of the Christ was given to all mankind when God made the promise in the early "good news" of Genesis 3:15. The Magi recognized that they were in need of a Messiah, too.

Yes, Jesus is the only Saviour for all mankind, and it is only by faith in Him (God's only provision for salvation) that Jews, Gentiles, men, women, boys and girls, Europeans, Asians, Africans, Americans, and people anywhere may have eternal life. "There is no other name under Heaven given among men, by which we must be saved," declared Peter in Acts 4:12. Jesus is the only way to Heaven.

2. The Star signified that *Jesus is the royal Christ* (Matthew 2:2). It was believed that a special star or heavenly occurrence was an omen of a birth of a special person—a King. So in seeing this special start, the Magi believed that there was a king being born or proclaimed from on high. And they wanted to be in on it. Just as many people gather today (pre- and post-COVID) for inaugurations, weddings, and deaths of important people, they did so back then as well. They wanted to be eyewitnesses to this tremendous happening and then be able to tell others, "I was there!" So they made their way to the Holy Land.

When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem they must have been sorely disappointed for they found that everything was business as usual – no dancing in the streets, no ticker tape parades, no national holiday. People did not even know about the birth of the king. And, when the Magi announced that the King of the Jews was born, the people, together with Herod, were disturbed. Herod was disturbed because here was a rival to his throne. The ordinary people were disturbed because they knew what happened when Herod felt threatened by rival claimants to the throne – he murdered, killed, and pillaged. The priests and leaders were disturbed because the Messiah's birth threatened their political alliances and public positions.

Yet all the Magi wondered was, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?" It was a simple question. It had a simple answer.

3. The Star drew men to worship the *God-Man Jesus* (Matthew 2:2). "We have come to worship Him." Worship means to bring

homage, adoration, and appreciation. It means giving of oneself to God. The wise men brought gifts to this child:

Gold – which indicated Jesus' Kingship.

Frankincense – which was a sign of prayer to God.

Myrrh – a funeral embalming oil, foretelling His Death.

4. The Star was *confirmed by Scripture* (Matthew 2:6). When the Biblical scholars of the times, affiliated with the Jewish Temple, were asked where the Messiah was to be born, they declared quite quickly, and in reference to the Scriptures, "in Bethlehem of Judea." These men knew their Bibles, knew where the Christ was to be born, and what God had said. They went right to Micah 5:2, which was the recognized prophecy of the origin of the Messiah. This is an important point. Signs, experiences, and the like are to be confirmed by the Word of God. They do not confirm the Word of God, as it cannot be doubted.

5. The Star brought *joy* (Matthew 2:10). While Herod and the others in Jerusalem may not have rejoiced, the wise men did! They saw the star again, and they were so joyful to know that they were on the right track. So they followed it to where it rested over where the young Child was. This is why I believe this was a supernatural happening. The star apparently brought them exactly where Jesus was. I'm not sure that a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter could be so precise. But no matter—with the star they found Jesus! The One they had sought for, the One they had traveled for, the One for whom they secured the special gifts, the One Whom they wanted to worship. And they rejoiced! If Herod and the Temple authorities would not have a party, they would! They would worship and be glad, for they had found their Messiah!

The account of the Magi calls to us all to "Come and worship, Worship Christ, the new born King." This account is a call for us all to say, "O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!" The Magi is calls to

us all to bow down and worship and adore Jesus, to give Him the best of our love and service – because He is the Messiah, the Christ, the King of the Jews.

It is hard for us today to imagine the god-like power of an ancient king. You see, there are few kings and queens today; and most of them that exist in today's world are mere figureheads without any real power or authority. But those who lived under the shadow of ancient thrones knew better: before the king all mortals either bow or perish.

At the beginning of the Gospel lies the news that Jesus is King, the Messiah, the Christ. And, it is with Christ as it is with ancient kings: either we bow down or we perish.

Learn from the wise men. Don't be like Israel. Instead, "Come and worship, Come and worship, Worship Christ, the new born King."

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