

BIRTH OF JESUS AND THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM : PART 1

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The Nativity, Comparison Between Different Gospel Accounts, Inaccurate Hollywood Movies: Shepherds And Three Wise Men, A Baby Or Little Boy, Stable Or House, Messianic Prophecies And Hardness Of The Jews, Herod Inquires When Jesus Was Born, God Made The Sun Moon And Stars To Serve As Signs, To Establish The Seasons, To Measure Time, To Give Light On The Earth, God Gave Magi Wisdom To Properly Interpret Signs To Reveal Time Of Jesus' Birth, God Is Very Careful Regarding Time-Sensitive Prophetic Information, Murderous Satan Strikes Via Herod As Soon As He Learns The Time, Satan Is Not All-Knowing, God's Prophetic Security System, It Is Not For You To Know, Warfare In Heaven And On Earth, Theory Regarding Possible Identity Of Star Of Bethlehem, Beautiful Planet Venus, Jesus Is Bright And Morning Star, Did Wise Men Follow Venus, Roman Goddess Of Love, God Is Love, Jesus Is God's Gift Of Love To The World

Many people -- both Christian and non-Christian alike -- are familiar with the Biblical account regarding the Nativity of Jesus Christ, the shepherds in the field, the famous Star of Bethlehem, and the wise men, or Magi. Concerning the wise men and the Star of Bethlehem, it may interest you to know that the Gospel of Matthew is the only Book in the New Testament where these particular aspects surrounding the Birth of Jesus are actually mentioned. Personally, considering the magnitude of these events, I find their absence from the other Synoptic Gospels, as well as from the Gospel of John, intriguing and mysterious. For example, Luke mentions the shepherds in the field, but he leaves out the Star of Bethlehem and the Magi, as we see by the following verses:

"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the

babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."
Luke 2:1-20, KJV

In his Gospel, Mark leaves out the early events in the life of Jesus entirely, and begins with the ministry of John the Baptist, followed by Jesus' baptism by John. The Gospel of John -- which is not a Synoptic Gospel -- is similar to the Gospel of Mark in that it opens with our introduction to the Word of God and the Light who is brought into the world, and then describes the ministry of John the Baptist as well.

As you may know, one of the biggest mistakes that is made in Hollywood movies which deal with the life of Christ, is that the shepherds and the wise men -- or Magi -- are often made to appear before the baby Christ child simultaneously. A simple reading of the Scriptures will quickly reveal that these two events were actually separated by a period of several years. In other words, when the shepherds arrived, Jesus was still a newborn baby in the manger, and Joseph and Mary were staying in the stable -- which may possibly have been a cave -- as we can determine by the previous verses that are found in the account that was written by Luke. If you doubt that this is so, consider the fact that in the following three verses, the same Greek word "brephos" is utilized. According to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, this word signifies an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a new-born child, an infant, and a babe:

"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger . . . And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.
Luke 2:12, 16, KJV

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:"
1 Peter 2:2, KJV

In contrast, when the wise men -- we really don't know how many there were; three is assumed due to the number of gift they bore -- arrived from the East -- more than likely from the region of Babylon, Media or Persia -- Jesus was already being referred to as a young child -- and not as a baby -- and Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living in a house now, and were no longer in a stable or a cave. In the following set of verses, the phrase "young child" is used three times. Thayer's Greek English Lexicon informs us that this phrase is derived from the Greek word "paidion", which means a

young child; that is, a little boy or a little girl:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way."

Matthew 2:1-12, KJV

This very same Greek word meaning little boy or little girl -- "paidion" -- is used in the following verses as well; and there is no doubt that Jesus was not referring to a newborn baby in them:

"And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them . . . Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven . . . And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

Matthew 18:2, 4-5, KJV

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

Mark 10:15, KJV

"Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein."

Luke 18:17, KJV

So the main point to consider here is that it took the wise men some time to arrive at Jerusalem, and then proceed to Bethlehem, as they followed this bright "star" in the sky. It did not happen one, two, three as a lot of movies like to indicate. Let's not forget that on average, movie producers only have about two hours in which to tell their story. So as I explained earlier, truth and historical accuracy are quite often compromised in the process.

As the previous verses explain, Jesus' birth was in fact prophesied in the Old Testament. Personally, I have always considered it interesting that this Messianic Prophecy that is found in Matthew 2:5-6, finds its origin in Micah 5:2. This makes it rather easy to remember, because both Book's names begin with the letter "M". Furthermore, as you can see, the numbers in the verse references are just reversed. Consider the following:

"But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
Micah 5:2, KJV

You see, in my view, this is one reason why the unbelieving Jews are so without excuse. They have had the Scriptures a lot longer than anyone else. They know what they say. They are familiar with all of the ancient prophecies; and yet they willingly wear blinders on their eyes due to their hardened hearts. As both Jesus and the Apostle Paul said concerning their unbelieving Jewish brethren:

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear."
Matthew 13:10-16, KJV

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."
Matthew 15:14, KJV

"Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! . . . Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."
Matthew 23:16, 24, KJV

"And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."
Mark 3:5, KJV

"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind. And some of the Pharisees which were

with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."

John 9:39-41, KJV

"(According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day . . . For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."

Romans 11:8, 25, KJV

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"

Ephesians 4:18, KJV

Going by the information that is contained in the Gospels, it appears that Jesus was probably a young boy of about two years of age when the wise men arrived from the East. There are two ways in which we can deduce this fact. First of all, you will notice that in the previous verses that are found in the Gospel of Matthew, we are informed that evil King Herod specifically asked the Magi at what time the star had appeared in the sky. In other words, this star did not just suddenly appear in the sky on the very night that Jesus was born. Matthew informs us that the Magi first saw the star in the East.

It would seem that the Lord apparently gave the wise men some very specific information which King Herod's court and the Scribes and the chief priests did not possess. While the Jews were familiar with the Messianic Prophecies, and informed the king that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, the crucial piece of information which they lacked -- which I suspect was by God's very own design in order to protect Jesus as long as possible -- was the precise timing of the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Christ. As you may recall, in the Book of Genesis we are informed that God placed the Sun, Moon and stars in the heavens to serve as signs, to establish the four seasons, to measure time, and to give light on the Earth. Consider the following verses:

"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."

Genesis 1:14-18, KJV

God apparently gave the Magi the wisdom and the knowledge to properly interpret those signs in the heavens, so that they could find the newborn Messiah, while the Jews were blinded to the same, even though He was already in their very midst.

There seems to be another important lesson which we can draw from this event. It concerns the fact that God is extremely careful with certain pieces of time-sensitive information. He guards it and protects it; because He knows that as soon as Satan becomes aware of it, he will act upon it. This is precisely what that old serpent did when he inspired Herod to murder all of the children in the town of Bethlehem and the surrounding region. The minute that Satan became aware of the fact that the time of the fulfillment of some of the Old Testament prophecies had finally arrived, he struck out, and violence and murder was in his plan. Years later, Jesus would tell the unbelieving Jews in the Gospel of John:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."
John 8:44, KJV

This tragic event again suggests to me that -- unlike God -- the Devil is not all-knowing. While he may possess knowledge of the written Word just like you and I, and while he may be familiar with the prophecies, and may thus know the end from the beginning, he is hindered and crippled by the fact that he does not know when specific prophetic events are going to occur, because the Lord has kept this information from him. God purposely keeps that Demon of the Dark literally in the dark concerning His prophetic plans, and He alone knows the times and the seasons in which He has ordained certain events to occur.

We find another clear example of God's "security system" in the Olivet Discourse, which is found in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew. As you may recall, after admiring the doomed Temple in Jerusalem, the Disciples had asked Jesus the following questions:

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"
Matthew 24:3, KJV

After providing His eager Disciples with a list of events which would occur and precede His coming and the end of the age, Jesus pulled the rug right out from under them when He said the following, as recorded in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."
Matthew 24:36, KJV

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the

angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."

Mark 13:32-33, KJV

Please notice that this information is so classified, that even Jesus Himself admits that He is not privy to it. It is obvious that the Disciples were very eager to obtain this information from the Lord; because in the first chapter of the Book of Acts, just prior to Jesus' Ascension to Heaven, we again find them seeking answers. However, once again, the Lord refuses to reveal to them the things which His Father alone knows, as we see by the following verses:

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

Acts 1:6-7, KJV

So once again we witness how our Heavenly Father's Divine Timetable is a highly-guarded secret. This same high level of secrecy regarding the culmination of God's plans for the world is revealed in a number of other verses which we find in the New Testament as well. Consider the following:

"Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up . . . The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,"

Matthew 24:42-43, 50, KJV

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

Matthew 25:13, KJV

"For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

Mark 13:34-37, KJV

"Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man

cometh at an hour when ye think not."
Luke 12:35-40, KJV

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."
Luke 21:34-36, KJV

"But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."
1 Thessalonians 5:2-6, KJV

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."
2 Peter 3:10, KJV

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."
Revelation 3:3, KJV

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."
Revelation 16:15, KJV

In a word, the clear message seems to be "It is not for you to know". But the question which arises is this: Was it not for them to know two thousand years ago, or is it not for us to know today as well? Please consider reading such articles as "As a Thief in the Night? Not for Me!", "Sorry . . . Jesus is Not Coming at Any Moment" and "The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping" if you are interested in acquiring an alternative perspective. There is a very specific reason why our Heavenly Father has employed these prophetic safeguards in His Kingdom. Let us not forget what Jesus said earlier in the same Gospel of Matthew regarding the spiritual warfare which remains invisible to our human eyes, unless God chooses to reveal it to us, as He did with the servant of the Prophet Elisha:

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."
Matthew 11:12, KJV

There is a serious war being waged -- both in Heaven, and on

Earth -- and God is not about to allow His plans to fall into the hands of Satan and his evil minions. Knowledge is power, and that is why God must always remain one step ahead of His rebellious adversary, Satan. It is my belief that this is why some information -- particularly time-specific information -- has not been revealed to us at this current time. Apparently, God does not believe that we need to know it yet, and it may even be dangerous for us to be in possession of such intel. Following are some additional verses which reveal the ongoing war in the Heavenly Domain:

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"
Ephesians 2:2, KJV

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."
Ephesians 6:12, KJV

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."
Isaiah 14:12-15, KJV

"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."
Luke 10:18, KJV

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth . . . And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."
Revelation 12:3-4a, 7-9, KJV

Continuing our previous discussion, we honestly do not know what the Star of Bethlehem was with any degree of certainty. It has been theorized that it may have possibly been a bright comet, or a supernova, or perhaps an alignment or conjunction of certain stars or planets. Allow me to offer you a personal theory regarding the possible identity of the famous Star of Bethlehem, for your consideration. As I mentioned earlier, in the Book of Genesis we are informed that God placed the Sun, Moon and stars in the heavens to serve as signs, to establish the four seasons, to measure time, and to give light on the Earth.

If you are an astronomer, or at least possess an interest in the field of astronomy, you will no doubt know that after the Moon itself, the planet Venus is the brightest object in the night sky. In fact, Venus is so bright -- with an apparent magnitude of -4.6 -- that not only is it capable of casting shadows, but as occurred with me when I was a young boy, it can easily be mistaken for an incoming airplane. It is really one magnificent sight. Now here is where it gets interesting. Because Venus reaches its maximum brightness just before the Sun rises, or right after the Sun sets, ancient astronomers and writers referred to it as both the Morning Star and the Evening Star; names which it has retained to our present time. Therein lies a possible Scriptural mystery. As you may know, in the Book of Revelation, Jesus is in fact referred to as "the bright and morning star". Consider the following verses:

"And I will give him the morning star."
Revelation 2:28, KJV

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."
Revelation 22:16, KJV

While it is possible that the previous verses are actually referring to the Sun -- after all, Psalm 84:11 says "For the LORD God is a sun and shield" -- what if the planet Venus is really being implied when Jesus says that He is "the bright and morning star"? What if the wise men -- who obviously had to be very knowledgeable of the heavens -- were following the planet Venus as it traveled its daily course low in the sky, from east to west, towards Jerusalem and Bethlehem? It would have been very easy to follow; because just as it still does today, Venus outshone everything else in the night sky two thousand years ago. But there is one other point which may add a degree of validity to this theory. The planet Venus receives its name from the Roman goddess of love and beauty. Roman paganism aside, don't the Scriptures teach us that our God is a God of Love? As the Apostle John writes:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."
1 John 4:8, KJV

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."
1 John 3:16, KJV

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."
John 3:16, KJV

So in my view, it seems quite appropriate that the true God of Love might use the planet of love -- Venus -- as a symbol and a sign in the night sky, to lead the wise men to Jesus Christ, who is both "the bright and morning star", as well as our Heavenly Father's ultimate manifestation of love to the people of Planet Earth. As inspiring and wonderful as my personal theory may seem, is it a solid theory? Please keep reading to find out.

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

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BIRTH OF JESUS AND THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM : PART 2

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Doubts Regarding The Star of Bethlehem Being A Typical Comet, Great Comet Of 1811 And 1997 Comet Hale-Bopp, God's Ways Are Past Finding Out, Was Star Of Bethlehem Visible To Everyone? The Star Of Bethlehem Appeared, The Splendor Of Magnificent Venus, The Secrets Of Psalm 19, Does Greek "Phaino" Suggest A Comet, Kuiper Belt Objects, Awe-Inspiring Comets, Foolish To Assume That We Understand God And His Ways, Star Of Bethlehem Went Before Magi And Stood Over Jesus' Birthplace, East-West Movement Of Stars And Other Celestial Objects, Bethlehem's Star Moved In Directions Contrary To Natural Order, Bethlehem Was Final Piece In Messianic Puzzle, Magi Search For The New King, Modern Science Dictates That All Celestial Objects Move East To West Across The Sky, With God All Things Are Possible, Foolishness Of Trying To Limit God Based On Our Understanding Of The Laws Of Physics, Basic Requirements For Life To Exist, Demonstrate Humility, Spiritual Beings Represented By Stars

As I mentioned in part one, some people have proposed that the famous Star of Bethlehem may have been a bright comet. Based on my rather limited knowledge regarding the field of astronomy, and given what crude instruments were probably at the disposal of astronomers two thousand years ago, I am not fully convinced that the Star of Bethlehem was any kind of a comet. If it truly was a comet, it was by no means a typical comet. I embrace this position for a simple reason. As I will explain more at length in a moment, the Magi had followed the "star" for approximately two years. If we assume that most of their observations were visual observations -- that is, with the naked eye, and without the aid of any kind of instruments -- it would have been nearly impossible -- or maybe totally impossible -- to have watched a comet for so long a period of time.

To help you to better understand my position, consider the fact that during the past two hundred years, there have only been two comets which have been observable with the unaided eye for extreme periods of time; and neither of the two was seen with the naked eye for two years, as the "comet" of the Star of Bethlehem would have been. The first of the two was what has been dubbed the Great Comet of 1811. This comet -- which is designated as C/1811 F1 -- was visible to the naked

eye for approximately two hundred and sixty days, or about eight months and three weeks, based on a thirty-day month.

The second comet will be very familiar to many of my readers. Dubbed the Great Comet of 1997, Hale-Bopp was discovered on July 23, 1995 while it was still at a very great distance from our Sun. It reached perihelion -- its closest point to the Sun -- on April 1, 1997. Comet Hale-Bopp was not only one of the brightest comets that has been seen for many decades, but it is also regarded as perhaps the most widely observed comet of the entire Twentieth Century. In fact, Hale-Bopp was visible to the naked eye for a period of eighteen months, or twice as long as the Great Comet of 1811.

As you can see, as wonderful as they were, neither the Great Comet of 1811, or the Great Comet of 1997 -- Comet Hale-Bopp -- were visible to the naked eye for a period of two years; and it would have been considered highly unusual if either of them had been observable with the unaided eye for so long a period of time. Of course, once it was no longer within our range of human vision, Hale-Bopp was tracked for a number of months by astronomers who did possess the required equipment which enabled them to do so.

This is not to say that God could not have created a comet two thousand years ago that was observable with the unaided eye for approximately two years. After all, He is the great Creator of the entire Universe, and He can do whatsoever He pleases. I am reminded of the following verses:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."
Isaiah 55:8-9, KJV

"Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number."
Job 9:10, KJV

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"
Romans 11:33, KJV

If God chose to create such a comet to serve as a sign which would lead the Magi to the Christ child, it would have been very awe-inspiring, because I would think that its magnitude would have to have exceeded anything we have observed in our modern day -- even greater than that of Comet Hale-Bopp -- in order for it to have been observable with the naked eye for a period of two years. Furthermore, all of the ancient world would have certainly talked about such an event, and written about it. Yet, for some strange reason, only Matthew mentions the Star of Bethlehem in his Gospel.

It mystifies me that not even the other Gospel writers seem to have thought it important enough to mention this Divine Sign in the sky. This has left me wondering if perhaps it is possible that the "star" was only seen by the wise men, and that it was not physically visible to everyone else. Or is it possible that it required certain scientific knowledge in

order to recognize the "star" for what it was?

As I mentioned a moment ago, there are a few possible flaws with my personal theory regarding the Star of Bethlehem possibly having been the planet Venus. The problem reveals itself in the fact that King Herod diligently inquired of the wise men "what time the star appeared". Furthermore, after the wise men had their audience with Herod, Matthew informs us that "the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was". To refresh your memory, here are the only four verses where the "star" is mentioned in the entire New Testament:

"Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. . . . Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."
Matthew 2:2, 7, 9-10, KJV

The first problem lies in the fact that "the star appeared". If we study the original Greek word that is used in this verse -- that is, "phaino" -- the implication appears to be that the "star" was not there and then it was. Consider the following excerpt that is taken from Thayer's Greek English Lexicon:

----- Begin Quote -----

phaino (fah'-ee-no)

KJV - appear 17, shine 10, be seen 2, seem 1, think 1; 31

- 1) to bring forth into the light, cause to shine, shed light
- 2) shine
 - 2a) to shine, be bright or resplendent
 - 2b) to become evident, to be brought forth into the light, come to view, appear
 - 2b1) of growing vegetation, to come to light
 - 2b2) to appear, be seen
 - 2b3) exposed to view
 - 2c) to meet the eyes, strike the sight, become clear or manifest
 - 2c1) to be seen, appear
 - 2d) to appear to the mind, seem to one's judgment or opinion

----- End Quote -----

So it seems that whatever this celestial object was, it may not have been visible in the sky prior to the time that the wise men first observed it. As the previous excerpt points out, the "star" was brought forth into the light. It began to shine, shed light, became evident, appeared, and came into view.

So why is this a problem insofar as my theory is concerned? Because if we accept the traditional Judeo-Christian view

that God created everything during the first Six Days of Creation, as per the Genesis account, then by necessity, this would also have to include the planet Venus. In other words, if these Magi were such learned men as we suppose, then it would seem that they would already be quite familiar with the planet Venus. They would have observed it many times over the years, and marvelled at its brightness and beauty. They would have also been familiar with its orbit. As such, they would not have considered it anything out of the ordinary or really something new. Of course, the Scriptures do not say that what they saw was something new. They simply say "we have seen his star in the east".

If you are personally familiar with Venus's unique appearance in the night sky, then you will know what I am talking about. There is no mistaking it. It stands out. Even lovely, bright Jupiter cannot compare to the splendor of magnificent Venus. Perhaps you have likewise made the mistake of thinking that low-lying Venus was an inbound airplane. That is how bright it is; particularly on a very clear night. Imagine how much more beautiful -- as well as visible -- our night sky must have been two thousand years ago before man-made pollution began to slowly block out God's wonderful Celestial Creation. Nowadays, one has to escape to the dark countryside to even get a glimpse of such celestial wonders. I am reminded of the following verse that begins King David's nineteenth Psalm:

"[To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.] The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork."
Psalms 19:1, KJV

While it is a short Psalm -- being only fourteen verses in length -- within its lines it reveals how God indeed uses His celestial wonders to reveal some of His secrets to the wise who know how to read and interpret them. For example, verse two through four state the following. Please notice the clear references to showing knowledge, and their voice and words being heard everywhere.:

". . . night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."
Psalm 19:2b-4a, KJV

If my assumption concerning the wise men being knowledgeable of Venus is correct, then it seems to me that whatever the Star of Bethlehem was, it may have displayed a magnificence even greater than that of the planet Venus. This explains why the wise men would be drawn to it in the first place. They took notice and realized that it was something very special, and something of great importance which they should follow, in order to determine where it would lead them. Thus they did.

As I studied the meaning of the Greek word "phaino", a very interesting realization came to me. If we accept the literal meaning of the word -- that is, to bring forth into the light and cause to shine -- it perfectly describes exactly what a comet does. As many of you will know, comets can spend a long time in the dark depths of Space. Depending on the particular

comet, years, decades, centuries or even millennia can pass before it enters the inner neighborhood of our Solar System. In fact, as I point out in "Alien Life, Extrasolar Planets and Universal Atonement", it has been estimated that there are some 70,000 of such objects in the distant Kuiper Belt which never leave that frigid region of Outer Space.

Until that time when a comet enters the inner regions of our Solar System, it remains invisible to both the naked eye, as well as to most astronomical instrumentation. However, just as soon as it begins to approach our Sun, what happens? The Greek word "phaino" tells us precisely. It is brought forth into the light and it begins to shine. Its surface begins to heat up and vaporize resulting in the formation of gaseous jets; it brightens more and more as it approaches the Sun; and in most cases, a long majestic tail forms behind it. To the unaided human eye, one minute it is not there, and the next minute it is. It appears as an awe-inspiring sight in the night sky.

In short, if we consider this meaning of the Greek "phaino", it would seem to lend support to my earlier statement that even though there is no knowledge of any comet having ever been visible to the unaided eye for a period of two years -- as would have been necessary for the Magi -- being who He is, God could have very easily created a comet which would meet these unique specifications. Who are we to say otherwise? As the Lord inquired of the Patriarch Job in the Old Testament:

"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? . . . Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth [the constellations of the Zodiac] in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

Job 38:1-7, 31-33, KJV

So once again we see that it is really foolish -- as well as boastful -- for any of us to make the erroneous assumption that we fully understand God and His ways. As I point out in the article entitled "Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word", what we understand is so infinitesimally small compared to God's greatness and Wisdom. Try as we might, a lifetime of dedicated study will still not reveal all of His secrets, and we will barely scratch the surface. As Solomon was inspired to write:

"And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Ecclesiastes 12:12-14, KJV

Aside from the fact that Venus has graced the night sky since the dawn of Creation as far as we know -- which means that it could not just suddenly appear as the Gospel of Matthew may be indicating -- a second problem with my theory lies in the fact that Matthew informs us that after the Magi's audience with King Herod, "the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was". Whether this means that the "star" stood over the town of Bethlehem, or exactly over the precise spot in which Jesus was born, we honestly do not know.

Of course, as I mentioned in part one, modern movie producers don't care either way. For dramatic effect, they like to show a brilliant star shining down directly on the exact location of the manger. At the same time, if we consider how exact our Heavenly Father appears to be in the Scriptures, it would not surprise me in the least if the "star" paused precisely over the spot where Joseph, Mary and Jesus were living. So why is this forward motion of the Star of Bethlehem a problem for my theory regarding Venus?

As most people realize, due to the rotation of the Earth, all celestial objects appear to rise in the east and set in the west. Yet it would seem that this wondrous sign from God did something strange. As any modern map will verify, Bethlehem is located about five or six miles to the south of Jerusalem. Political realities place it in the Occupied Territory of the West Bank. However, two millennia ago, it is possible that it was situated slightly more to the southwest of Jerusalem. We need to remember that at that time, only the Old City -- or what is today referred to as East Jerusalem -- existed. That means that if the "star" went before them, it must have been moving in a southwesterly direction as they traveled the short distance from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. It does not seem that it moved westward as a normal star would do. Very interesting!

Here is a related point to consider. The wise men obviously didn't make a beeline from their point of origin to the city of Jerusalem. Due to the various geological features of that region of the Earth -- that is, deserts, mountains, rivers, marshes, etc. -- at times they probably had to travel north, south, and west. Other factors -- such as dangers along the way in the form of roving thieves, etc. -- may have also had an effect on their planned route. Yet if the unusual "star" in fact "went before them" from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, then it is probably safe to assume that it also went before them even if they traveled north, south or west from their place of origin. Again, normal celestial objects cannot do that.

To add to this mystery, not only did the object move in a direction which was contrary to the laws of nature, but as we have seen, it also came to a stop once the house of Joseph and Mary had been reached. As I explained earlier, we really don't know if it just came to a standstill over the entire village of Bethlehem, or if somehow it paused right over the very house where Joseph, Mary and toddler Jesus resided. Given the physics involved -- that is, the size of the object, its distance from Earth, etc. -- it would not seem that it could actually settle over any one

particular house. Of course, this is assuming that it was actually a real star.

However, as I mentioned earlier, I suspect that it may have done that very thing for the following reason. Consider the situation in which the wise men found themselves. They were obviously strangers in a strange land. Apparently, with the help of God, they read the signs in the stars and learned of the birth of a great king who was born in the lands west of them. In fact, somehow, it appears that they may have known that this king was born in Israel, because when they arrived in Jerusalem they specifically inquired "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?".

Their natural reaction was to go to Jerusalem, because they supposed that as the capital of Israel, that is where this great king was to be found. Instead, they found crafty, murderous King Herod who was apparently clueless until the Scribes and chief priests informed him of the prophecies. However, that was the Wisdom of God at work; because the Lord knew that the Magi had to go to Jerusalem in order to acquire the final piece of His great "Messianic Puzzle". That piece was Bethlehem.

At any rate, they were strangers in a strange land. No doubt they spoke a foreign tongue as well. Perhaps Babylonian or Persian. They certainly didn't know anyone in Bethlehem; and a two-year-old toddler named Jesus probably didn't stand out from any other child in the neighborhood; at least not yet. So how were these wise men to find this child? It would more than likely be like trying to find a needle in a haystack. So given the importance of their visit, perhaps in His abundant Graciousness and Mercy, God allowed the "star" to in some way lead them to the exact house. Can I prove it? Obviously not.

The only other possibility is to suggest that the Magi went from house-to-house in Bethlehem, and inquired if there were any boys who were two years old or younger. Even still, once they found Him, how would they know that He was God's young Son in the flesh, and a king-to-be? How would they be able to recognize Him as such? So God had to give them some kind of special assistance.

Regardless of whether we are talking about a star, a comet, a planet such as Venus, a planetary alignment, a supernova, or any other natural celestial phenomenon that is observable from the Earth, if we adopt a purely scientific approach, we can only conclude that none of them possess the ability to advance in a southwesterly direction as they traverse the night sky. They certainly can't zigzag north, south and west from some locale in the East, to the village of Bethlehem. Neither do they possess the ability to stop in their tracks when a particular destination has been reached. Finally, as far as we know, since the beginning of time, God has set all of their courses to appear to move from east to west across our sky, and not north to south as the Star of Bethlehem seems to have done for at least a portion of its journey.

So, where does this leave us? Some of you may be thinking to yourselves, "Well, wait a minute WordWeaver! Now I am really confused! First you share with us what appears to be a solid theory concerning the planet Venus, even offering Scriptures

which seem to support it, and then you just shoot it full of holes. Next you offer scientific reasons regarding why the Star of Bethlehem could not have been a comet. Finally, you explain that stars just don't move north, south and west in the night sky. So exactly what are you saying?"

If you have carefully read everything that I have stated thus far, then hopefully you will have recognized that I have also intentionally injected a caveat in my statements. I have repeatedly said in so many words, "Science says this, and science says that." But you see, as Christians, we need to see beyond what science states is possible, and look at what is possible with God. The fact of the matter is that according to His Word, all things are possible with God, as we see by the following group of verses:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"
Numbers 23:19, KJV

"But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."
Matthew 19:26, KJV

"Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."
Mark 9:23, KJV

"And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."
Mark 10:27, KJV

"And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."
Mark 14:36, KJV

"And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible."
Luke 1:36-37, KJV

"And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."
Luke 18:27, KJV

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,"
Ephesians 3:20, KJV

If all things are possible with God, then there is no limit. If our great God set the courses of the stars and the planets in the sky at the beginning of Creation, exactly as His Word informs us, who are we to say that He does not possess the power to also change the course of one of them, if it is His desire, and if it suits His Divine Purposes? For us to limit God, and what He is capable of doing, based on our extremely limited understanding of His Laws of Physics, is foolishness

indeed. God does not operate according to how we humans think He should operate; He operates according to how He chooses, regardless of whether or not we understand it.

Even modern scientists recognize that what they think they understand, often proves to be false or shortsighted, once additional tests have been carried out, and new data has been analyzed. At the very least, they discover that there is a lot more to the picture than even they had at first realized.

Let me give you a simple example. Just a few decades ago, the general consensus within the scientific world was that life could only exist within a certain temperature range. Likewise, it was assumed that all forms of life must be carbon-based. It was also believed that oxygen and hydrogen -- and thus, water -- were necessary requirements in order for life as we know it to exist. It was repeatedly affirmed that if life exists in some form outside of our planet, it has to meet these rigid, basic requirements. However, as you may know, in more recent years, these long-held notions have all been challenged by evidence on the ground, and possibly in Outer Space as well. What the future may reveal is rather difficult to say.

The bottom line is that regardless of whether an individual happens to be a Bible-believing Christian, an agnostic, a staunch atheist, or a man of science who demands hard-core scientific facts and evidence, we simply don't know it all; and to pretend otherwise is ludicrous. As I stated earlier, we all need to exercise a degree of humility in our personal understanding.

Concerning the nature of the Star of Bethlehem, there is one school of thought which has in fact dismissed the possibility that it could have been a star, a comet or some other body in Space. This rejection is due in part to some of the reasons which I have already explained to you. In other words, based on purely scientific reasoning, and the behavior of the Star of Bethlehem, they are convinced that the "star" could not have really been an actual physical star or similar celestial body. Therefore, they conclude that it must have been purely supernatural; that is, something above and beyond the natural laws and physics. In other words, it must have been a purely spiritual manifestation -- such as an Angel perhaps -- which was permitted by God in order to lead the wise men to the young boy Jesus.

While I believe that the people who adopt this position are making the mistake that I described a moment ago -- that is, limiting God based upon scientific reasoning -- at the same time, neither do I totally dismiss a spiritual interpretation of the event either. After all, as I explain in such articles as "The Children of Light: Are You One of Us?" and "Comet Hale-Bopp, Chernobyl and the Deathstar Wormwood", there are quite a few Scriptures found throughout the Bible which also compare God and His children to celestial lights, and Angels to stars. Consider the following sample verses:

"Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Job 38:6-7, KJV

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."
Psalms 84:11, KJV

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."
Daniel 12:3, KJV

"All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."
1 Corinthians 15:39-44, KJV

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
James 1:17, KJV

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day . . . Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."
Jude 1:6, 13, KJV

"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit."
Revelation 9:1, KJV

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born . . . And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."
Revelation 12:3-4, 7-9, KJV

Please go to part three for the continuation of this series.

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BIRTH OF JESUS AND THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM : PART 3

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The Greek Words For "Star" And "Stars" In The New Testament, Signs In The Heavens, Constellations Planets And Wandering Stars, Mazzaroth: Zodiac And Seasonal Constellations, Fallen Angels Have Lost Their Glory, "Phosphoros" = Light Bringing, Jesus Is The Day Star, Morning Star And Light Of The World, God The Father Symbolized By The Sun, Venus Represents Jesus, The Physical Creation Reflects Spiritual Realities, God The Father Is Greater Than Jesus, Jesus Is A Perfect Reflection Of His Father, Jesus Was Given The Spirit Without Measure, No Man Has Seen God At Any Time, God The Father And Jesus Are Constant And Never Change, Father Of Lights And The Morning Star, Looking Unto Jesus, Jesus The Light Bringer Symbolized By Venus, Zacharias Prophecies Of The Dayspring From On High

As I noted in part two, in the Bible, our Heavenly Father, Jesus, Angelic Beings, and even ourselves are symbolically described as both lights and stars. However, in my opinion, there is a problem with interpreting the Star of Bethlehem as a purely spiritual manifestation, as I will now explain to you for your personal consideration.

In the New Testament of the King James Version of the Bible, the words "star" and "stars" are found a total of twenty-nine times. In twenty-five instances, they are translated from the Greek word "aster", which means "a star". In three instances, they are derived from the Greek word "astron" which signifies a star, or a group of stars; that is, a constellation. There is one other instance, which I will discuss momentarily, and separately, for a very special reason.

While the word "aster" is used to denote both physical stars and symbolic stars -- that is, spiritual beings -- it seems to me that the Magi -- who were apparently men of science -- must have known exactly what they were seeing as they gazed towards the heavens. In other words, when they said "we have seen his star in the east" -- Matthew 2:2 -- that is exactly what they meant. While it is possible, I am not convinced that they would have mistaken an Angel for a star, or called some kind of spiritual manifestation a star. These men knew their stuff. After all, they did travel a long distance over a period of a few years to find the young boy Jesus. If they had seen an Angel or some other spiritual manifestation, I think they would have described it as something other than a star. Don't you agree?

Furthermore, as we have already seen, in the Book of Genesis the Lord specifically tells us through the writer Moses that He has created the various heavenly bodies, and set them in motion, to serve as signs, to establish the four seasons, to measure time, and to give light on the Earth. Throughout the pages of the Bible we find a variety of verses where we are told the very same thing. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus also informs us that at the end of the world, there will be signs in the heavens. Consider the following sample verses:

"And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come."
Joel 2:30-31, KJV

"He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."
Daniel 6:27, KJV

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"
Matthew 16:1-3, KJV

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."
Matthew 24:29-30, KJV

"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."
Mark 13:24-26, KJV

"Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven."
Luke 21:10-11, KJV

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that

great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Acts 2:17-21, KJV

"And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."

Revelation 6:12-14, KJV

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise."

Revelation 8:10-12, KJV

"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born."

Revelation 12:3-4, KJV

So, based on the previous Scriptural evidence, it seems to me that God would not say one thing, and then turn around and do something to the contrary. In other words, it is my personal belief that He would not say that He is going to use the physical heavenly bodies to create physical signs in the heavens, and then turn around and use some other type of mechanism to produce the Star of Bethlehem. This is not to say that He could not do this if He so desired, but it would seem to contradict the Biblical pattern for Him to do so.

Before sharing with you the final Greek word that we find translated as "star" in the New Testament, allow me to share one related interesting fact. While some of the planets were known to the ancients -- at least those which were visible to the unaided eye -- it is interesting to note that in the entire King James Version of the Bible, the word "planets" is only found one time. That is in the following verse:

"And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven."

2 Kings 23:5, KJV

Ironically, in this case, the word "planets" may very well be a poor translation. You may recall that in part two we

examined the following verses from the Book of Job:

"Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?"

Job 38:31-33, KJV

As I explained in brackets in part two, the word "Mazzaroth" is actually referring to the twelve signs of the Zodiac, and the thirty-six constellations which are associated with them. The Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew Aramaic English Lexicon notes that the word "Mazzaroth" is derived from the Hebrew "mazzarah". Notice that when the Lord is rebuking Job, He says "Mazzaroth in his season". As most people know, the constellations are in fact seasonal. Different ones appear in the night sky at different times of the year. So to reiterate, it is rather clear that the word "Mazzaroth" is referring to the seasonal march of the constellations. As such, it is a good translation of the Hebrew word "mazzarah".

In contrast, in 2 Kings 23:5, while the word "planets" is used, the same lexicon informs us that the word "planets" is derived from the Hebrew "mazzalah, which, as you can probably guess, is also a reference to the constellations, and perhaps the signs of the Zodiac.

While the word "planets" is used -- possibly erroneously so -- in 2 Kings 23:5, it may surprise you to discover that the actual Greek word "planētēs" is used one time in the pages of the New Testament of the KJV Bible. Not only that, but I already shared with you the verses where the word is found. However, it is doubtful that you will recognize it, because the word was not translated into English as "planets". You see, based upon its actual Greek meaning of "a wanderer", it was translated as "wandering stars" instead. Here are the verses again from Jude's Epistle:

"And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day . . .

Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame;
wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of
darkness for ever."

Jude 1:6, 13, KJV

Without even intending to, I may have uncovered a new concept and Biblical mystery which I have never seen before. You see, while God's Word repeatedly symbolizes God the Father, Jesus, and even ourselves as lights and stars, in contrast, Fallen Angels are described as "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever". Stars generate their own light, while planets -- or "wandering stars" as translated in the previous verse -- do not. As the Apostle Paul informs us in 1 Corinthians 15, stars each have their own glory, while planets must reflect the light of the Sun. The Fallen Angels who are mentioned by Jude have simply lost their own glory. Therefore, they can no longer shine of their own accord as they used to do. It is as if their spiritual power supply has been cut off.

There is a reason why I have shared all of this information regarding planets with you. We have not yet discussed the final Greek word that is translated as "star" in the New Testament of the King James Version of the Bible. This final word is very special, and it is used in a very special way. Furthermore, it is only used one time according to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, and it is also used in a metaphorical sense to describe only one person. Can you guess who it is?

The Greek word I am referring to is "phosphoros". While it means "light bringing", in the context that it is used in the following verse, it can actually be understood to mean "light bringer", because it is referring to one person in particular:

"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 arise in your hearts:"
2 Peter 1:19, KJV

In the previous verse, the phrase "day star" is the English translation of the Greek "phosphoros". For those of you who may not fully understand what Peter is implying here, he is in fact referring to Jesus Christ in a metaphorical sense. Who is the "Day Star" in the Scriptures? Who is the "Morning Star" in the Scriptures? Who is the Light of the World who has shined in the dark place of our hearts and given us both Light and Truth? We all know that it is none other than Jesus Christ! Consider the following verses:

"Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:"
Psalms 104:2, KJV

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."
Isaiah 9:2, KJV

"And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day;"
Isaiah 10:17, KJV

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."
John 1:4-9, KJV

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
John 8:12, KJV

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."
John 9:5, KJV

"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth . . . I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

John 12:35, 46, KJV

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Isaiah 60:19-20, KJV

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there."

Revelation 21:23-25, KJV

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."

Revelation 22:16, KJV

In part one of this series I shared a verse with you from the Book of Psalms. That verse is the following, and in it, King David metaphorically describes God the Father as the Sun:

"For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Psalms 84:11, KJV

I also mentioned that while the phrase "morning star" could be referring to the Sun because of Psalm 84:11, personally, I am more inclined to believe that it is referring to the planet Venus, and metaphorically to Jesus as well. As many of you will already know, the physical creation is merely a reflection of spiritual realities. Our planetary system is likewise a reflection of spiritual realities; if we are able to see it and comprehend it. Having said that, let me share with you a few verses where Jesus describes His relationship to His Father. Perhaps you will be able to solve the mystery for yourself:

"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I."

John 14:28, KJV

"Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these

also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel . . . I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."
John 5:19-20, 30, KJV

There are two important pieces of information which we can garner from Jesus' words. First, as Jesus states, God the Father is greater than Himself. Second, Jesus can only do -- or reflect -- what He sees His Father do. This is why Jesus also said the following in the Gospel of John:

"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"
John 14:9, KJV

As I explain in other articles, please note that Jesus is not saying that He is actually God the Father. He is simply saying that because He is such a perfect reflection of His Father's Will, Purpose and Divine Nature, in seeing Him, we have seen the Father. Furthermore, let us not forget that Jesus was given the Spirit without measure. While He was and is the Son of God, during His time on Earth, while He served as His Father's personal Ambassador to humanity, Jesus was given a full measure of His Father's Power and Authority, as we can determine by the following verses:

"For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."
John 3:34, KJV

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."
Colossians 2:9, KJV

In fact, if Jesus was saying that He is actually God the Father -- as certain Christians erroneously suppose -- then it would totally contradict the following verses and similar verses:

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."
John 1:18, KJV

"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."
1 John 4:12, KJV

People literally and physically saw Jesus walking on the Earth; yet we are told that "No man hath seen God at any time; so you do the math. It makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

So how are these spiritual truths represented in our Solar System? As we have already discussed, God the Father is represented by the Sun. As we saw in part two, the Apostle James metaphorically calls God the Father "the Father of lights" -- that is, the Sun -- as we see here:

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."
James 1:17, KJV

In other words, just like the Sun, God the Father is very constant and does not change. Furthermore, being as Jesus is the perfect reflection of His Father, He likewise does not change. These eternal truths are revealed to us through the following verses:

"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."
Malachi 3:6, KJV

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
Hebrews 13:8, KJV

As we have also seen from verses in the Book of Revelation, Jesus is represented as "the bright and morning star"; that is, He is symbolized by the planet Venus. Here again are those two verses for your personal inspiration:

"And I will give him the morning star."
Revelation 2:28, KJV

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."
Revelation 22:16, KJV

Thus we have the inseparable team of the Father of Lights and the Morning Star working together towards one common goal for the benefit of humankind.

Clearly, the Father-Son relationship is perfectly represented by what we see in the sky. Just as Jesus informs us that the Father is greater than Himself, the physical Sun is likewise much bigger, brighter and greater than Venus. However, as far as the night sky is concerned, aside from the Moon, which is by far the brightest celestial object in both the morning and the evening sky? There is no question that it is the planet Venus. It rules both the early morning sky, and the early evening sky, before it slips below the horizon.

Let me share with you another inspiring parallel that exists between our physical Solar System and the spiritual realities of the Father-Son relationship. As we have seen, God's Word clearly informs us that "No man hath seen God at any time". That is why Jesus has "declared him" -- or manifested His Heavenly Father to us -- so that we may know Him. In similar fashion, neither can a person gaze directly at the Sun with unprotected eyes, lest he go blind. However, he can look at the glory of the planet Venus -- or Jesus -- all he wants to without any worry. As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."
Hebrews 12:2, KJV

It is not merely some scientific coincidence that Venus rules both the morning and the evening skies at different times of the year. It was perfectly planned by our Heavenly Father to convey His truth to us. It is very fitting that Jesus -- who perfectly reflects the Light and Glory of His and our Father more than any other creature in Heaven and on Earth -- should be represented by the planet of love -- Venus -- which is also the brightest object in the sky after the Moon.

As I explained earlier, according to Thayer's Greek English Lexicon, the Greek word "phosphoros" is only used one time in the entire New Testament of the KJV Bible, and it is used by Peter in a metaphorical sense to describe Jesus Christ, who is the Day Star, the Morning Star, the Light Bringer, and the Light of the World. If you still doubt these truths, and the unique relationship which they have with the planet Venus, then consider what the lexicon has to say regarding this very unique word "phosphoros":

----- Begin Quote -----

- 1) light bringing, giving light
- 2) the planet Venus, the morning star, day star
- 3) metaph. Christ

----- End Quote -----

Believe it or not, but even in the very first chapter of the Gospel of Luke, we are given a small piece of this amazing Scriptural puzzle. As you may recall, due to his unbelief at the Angel Gabriel's words concerning his son, Zacharias -- the father of John the Baptist -- was struck dumb. However, on the eighth day of his life, when according to the Laws of Moses and the covenant which God made with Abraham, John was to be circumcised, Luke informs us that a miracle occurred.

While according to tradition, John should have been named Zacharias after his father, when asked how his son should be named, Zacharias asked for a tablet and wrote down the name John. At that point, his speech was restored, and he began to prophesy regarding John's future ministry as the Prophet who would prepare the way for Jesus. Notice how Zacharias refers to Jesus -- the Light of the World -- visiting the people of Planet Earth:

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,"
Luke 1:78, KJV

In the previous verse, the word "dayspring" is derived from the Greek word "anatole". As I point out in other articles such as the "Horde From Hell, China, Turkey and the Kings of the East", this word signifies the direction east, as well as the place where the Sun, planets, stars and other bodies rise above the horizon. It is the place where the light and the new day spring forth, just as the Light of Jesus Christ springs forth in our hearts.

Thus we see the common metaphorical language that is used to describe Jesus Christ throughout the New Testament. In light of all of this amazing information that is somewhat hidden within the pages of the Bible, I am more inclined to embrace

my theory regarding the Star of Bethlehem possibly being the planet Venus. As we have seen, with our Heavenly Father, all things are possible, despite what men of science may say.

Please go to part four for the conclusion of this series.

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BIRTH OF JESUS AND THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM : PART 4

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Scriptural Evidence Suggests Star Of Bethlehem May Have Been Venus, No Biblical Indication That Wise Men Continually Saw The Star Or That It Was Continually In Front Of Them As They Traveled From The East, Did The Setting Of Venus Serve As A Pointer Which Pointed Down To The Earth To Bethlehem, Star Of Bethlehem Did Not Have To Zigzag In The Sky To Always Be In Front Of Magi, The Star May Have Temporarily Disappeared From View, Venus Occults Behind Sun Or Disappears In Its Glare For Several Months Each Year, A Possible Short-Period Comet, King Herod The Great Builds Herodium Fortress And Palace, Nothing Is Impossible With God, God Stops Sun And Moon For Joshua, God Turns Back Sun Ten Degrees For Righteous King Hezekiah, Faith In God And His Word Or Faith In Men And Their Science, Jewish Royalty Killed Their Own Families To Preserve Their Own Power, Wicked Queen Athaliah, Murder Was In Their Blood, Herod Was Troubled By Magi's News Regarding Birth Of A King, Wise Men Traveled Several Years To Find Jesus, Children Of Bethlehem And Surrounding Region Are Slaughtered By Evil King Herod, Joseph Mary And Jesus Flee To Egypt Until King Herod Is Dead, Wise Men Provided Joseph And Mary Financial Means To Flee To And Survive In Egypt, Joseph's Example Of Obedience And Faith, Faith Pleases God, Closing Remarks, Reading List

As I concluded in part three, in my view, there just seems to be so much Scriptural evidence which suggests and hints at the possibility that the Star of Bethlehem may have been the planet Venus. In fact, as I worked on this series, my eyes were opened to yet another possible way in which this could have occurred, even without defying the known laws of physics.

I mentioned earlier that if our famous "star" moved in front of the Magi as they traveled from their country in the East, then based on human thinking, it would seem that if they had to travel north or south along their route in order to avoid mountains, deserts, marshes and possible enemies, the "star" would have to zigzag in the sky in order to constantly remain literally in front of them. However, a closer reading of the

Apostle Matthew's account reveals that this may not have been necessary whatsoever. Why? Because he does not specifically state that they followed the "star" day after day while they traveled their route from the East. Neither does Matthew write that the "star" was continually in front of them during their entire journey. That is just supposition, and quite possibly an erroneous one at that.

In the four verses that I shared with you earlier where the "star" is mentioned, we are told "we have seen his star in the east" and "the star, which they saw in the east". In other words, nowhere is there any specific indication that the wise men continually saw the "star" as they traveled the long route to Jerusalem. They saw it from their position in the East. If it was in fact Venus, perhaps they simply saw it setting as they looked towards the western sky, just as many of us today likewise see Venus low in the sky just as it sets. In other words, as the Magi watched it disappear below the Earth's horizon, perhaps they interpreted it as a pointer which was pointing down to the Earth, to the exact place where the new king was born in Bethlehem.

Assuming that the Star of Bethlehem was the planet Venus, even if they did continually observe it for many months as they traveled from their homeland in the East -- which is not made clear in Matthew's Gospel -- there is still a way in which it could technically still be in front of them, without having to zigzag all over the place, as they made turns in their route in order to overcome obstacles. In other words, depending on one's perspective, it didn't have to violate any known laws of physics. How so? Consider the following:

The Magi saw Venus setting in the western sky on one -- or possibly more -- occasion(s). This alone set their general direction as being due west. In other words, from their perspective, regardless of whether or not they had to at times alter their course in order to overcome obstacles, looking forward in front of them would always mean looking westward, because that was their ultimate goal and general direction. Furthermore, whether it was one time or more, whenever they looked westward, they would see their sign, Venus, setting below the horizon. So in a sense, Venus was always in front of them, because they were gradually moving westward day by day, week by week, and month by month. Do you understand?

As I said, there is a possibility that the Magi did not see the "star" -- or Venus, if you prefer -- on a regular and continual basis. In the four verses that I shared with you earlier, there appears to be a small hint that this may be so. Twice we are told in those four verses that they saw the "star" in the East, and that is all that we are told. This leaves open the possibility that the Magi saw it, and then for some unknown reason it may have disappeared. If this is the case, perhaps this explains the joy they expressed when the "star" reappeared, after their visit to the court of King Herod, as we see by these two verses:

"When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw

the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."
Matthew 2:9-10, KJV

If the Magi had observed the "star" on a regular basis since they had first started out on their journey to Jerusalem, it does not seem that there would be any rational reason for their "exceeding great joy". On the other hand, if they had lost sight of it for some undetermined amount of time, this would be a plausible reason for their being overjoyed upon seeing it again.

As it turns out, if the Star of Bethlehem was in fact the planet Venus -- which still remains just a theory -- there is a valid scientific explanation regarding why they may not have seen it for some time. There are two conditions which would result in the planet not being seen from our position on the Earth. The first is when Venus is hidden behind the Sun. The second is when it is so close to the Sun, that the glare of the Sun makes it invisible to our eyes. In short, there are certain months each year when Venus cannot be seen from the Earth. Perhaps this is what the wise men likewise experienced. Venus slipped below the horizon, and then they did not see it for some time, until they arrived in Israel.

As I considered this possible disappearing act, it brought my attention back to our conversation regarding comets. As I explained earlier, no comet is known to have been visible to the unaided eye for a period of two years. However, with this new possibility that the Star of Bethlehem may have been lost from sight for an undetermined amount of time, the idea of the return of a short-period comet occurred to me. For those of you who may not be familiar with this astronomical term, a short-period comet is one which has an orbital period of two hundred years or less. In other words, it is observable from the Earth every two hundred years, or sooner. Of course, this assumes that it hasn't slammed into the Sun or into another heavenly body, or been disintegrated by the heat of the Sun.

While there are many such short-period comets, my research reveals that none of the currently known comets really meet our requirements of being visible every two years. In fact, the only one that appears to come close is Comet Encke. This comet -- which is next due to return in November of 2013 -- has an orbital period of 3.30 years. However, as you can see, even this is too lengthy a period to fit Matthew's account. Be that as it may, this doesn't completely close the door on the possibility that the Star of Bethlehem could have been a returning short-period comet. After all, said comet could have been destroyed sometime during the past two thousand years.

As far as I can tell, there are only two or three aspects of the Star of Bethlehem story which may still pose a possible challenge to my Venus theory. The first is the fact that we are told that "the star appeared". As we have already seen, this suggests that the star may not have always been visible to the wise men. However, with the explanation I provided earlier regarding Venus' occultation behind the Sun, as well as being washed out by the glare of the Sun during certain months of the year, we may have found a plausible solution to this problem.

The second challenge is the fact that Matthew informs us that after the Magi left Herod's court and proceeded to the town of Bethlehem, the star "went before them". If we assume that the word "before" means in front of them -- it's derived from the Greek word "proago" meaning to go before, lead forth, go forward or proceed -- this does pose a problem; because as I mentioned earlier, back at that time, Bethlehem was situated about five miles to the southwest of Jerusalem, which would place Venus more to the right, rather than directly in front of them. Of course, depending on bends in the road, perhaps at times the planet really was directly in front of the Magi as they traveled the road to Bethlehem.

While we can assume that the wise men had their audience with King Herod at his palace that was located in the northwestern corner of Jerusalem -- Matthew does write "there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem" -- another possibility that is worth considering is that Herod may have been residing at Herodium at that particular time. Herodium was a combination fortress and palace which Herod the Great built on the edge of the Judean Desert, on the top of an artificially elevated cone-shaped mountain. This fortress-palace was situated about seven and a half miles south of Jerusalem, and several miles to the southeast of Bethlehem. It was eventually destroyed by the Romans in 71 AD. As with Bethlehem itself, the remains of Herodium are in the West Bank. After many years of searching, the mausoleum of Herod the Great was located at Herodium, and his tomb unearthed. However, no human remains were found in his broken sarcophagus.

If you look at a map of Israel, you will see that while the ruins of Herodium are located to the southeast of Bethlehem, they are located sufficiently to the east of Bethlehem, that maybe it is possible that for at least part of their journey, Venus may have appeared to be in front of the Magi. As I said earlier regarding Jerusalem, the same applies to Herodium. In other words, it depends a lot on the structure of the road at that time.

As we discussed earlier, the final challenge to my theory regarding Venus possibly having been the Star of Bethlehem is that Matthew tells us that the star "came and stood over where the young child was". The word "stood" is translated from the Greek word "histemi", which means to stand by or near, to make firm, fix, establish, put or set. One point I wish to call to your attention is that nowhere does Thayer's Greek English Lexicon specifically state the word actually means to stop. However, even if the Star of Bethlehem did come to a complete standstill, while modern science rejects such a possibility, as we have already seen, all things are possible with God.

If you personally doubt that this is so, then let me remind you of a few stories from the Old Testament in which God did some mighty miracles which involved -- believe it or not -- completely stopping, or reversing, heavenly bodies in their tracks. In the first story, Joshua and his men were fighting against the Amorites. However, in order to win the battle, they required more daylight hours. So, Joshua, being the man of great faith that he was, petitioned the Lord to stop both the Sun and the Moon in their tracks. That is precisely what God did for him for almost an entire day, as we read in the

following verses:

"Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel."

Joshua 10:12-14, KJV

In the second Bible story, righteous King Hezekiah was sick unto death, and would have surely died had the Lord not taken mercy on him and intervened. Of course, one reason why God did this, is because during his reign, Hezekiah had done a lot to clean up the idolatry which plagued Israel. Furthermore, when he became sick, Hezekiah got really desperate with the Lord. So God honored the king's prayer request and sent the Prophet Isaiah with the following message for the king:

"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, And said, Remember now, O LORD, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. Then came the word of the LORD to Isaiah, saying, Go, and say to Hezekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will add unto thy days fifteen years. And I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria: and I will defend this city. And this shall be a sign unto thee from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that he hath spoken; Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees, which is gone down in the sun dial of Ahaz, ten degrees backward. So the sun returned ten degrees, by which degrees it was gone down." Isaiah 38:1-8, KJV

So, if God is able to turn the Sun back ten degrees -- which is forty minutes based on our modern concept of degrees -- or even completely stop the Sun and the Moon in their tracks for almost a whole day, is it really so difficult for Him to also stop Venus -- or any other celestial body -- in its tracks, in order to point to the birthplace of the Messiah? So once again we see that it comes down to either placing our faith in God's Word and believing in the impossible, or placing our faith in man and his science. The choice is really up to you.

With these final verses from the Book of Isaiah, I have now presented all of my evidence for your personal consideration. Whether or not my theory is valid, I will leave up to you to decide for yourself. Regardless of your personal position, I think we should all marvel at God's Wisdom and Foresight, as well as His planning. As you will see in a moment, regardless of the precise mechanism that God used to help them to find Joseph, Mary and the boy Jesus, the wise men did play a very

important role in God's plan for humanity.

To continue, after the wise men had informed King Herod at what time the star had appeared in the sky, that wicked king decreed that all children who were under two years of age had to be slaughtered. Obviously, the reason why Herod did this was to protect his throne from any future challengers. This becomes evident in various Old Testament stories where some of the Jewish royalty did not hesitate to murder their own family members in order to preserve their own power. I am reminded in particular of one very evil woman by the name of Athaliah, who was wife and queen to wicked King Jehoram, and the mother of Ahaziah. Ahaziah only ruled from Jerusalem for one year. Following Ahaziah's execution -- which was a judgment from the Lord due to his wickedness -- we read the following regarding Athaliah:

"But when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah. But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bedchamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not. And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land . . . Then they brought out the king's son [Joash], and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king. Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD: And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason. Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD. So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse gate by the king's house, they slew her there . . . And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword."

2 Chronicles 22:10-12, 23:11-15, 21, KJV

In case you didn't quite understand the previous verses, let me clarify a few points for you. Jehoram and Athaliah were married, and were king and queen over Jerusalem and Judah. Two of their children were Ahaziah -- a son -- and a sister named Jehoshabeath, who also happened to be married to the high priest, Jehoiada. Athaliah apparently favored her son Ahaziah. However, upon his brief reign and death, she went on a killing spree and arranged to have all of the remaining royal offspring murdered, so that she alone could sit upon the throne in Jerusalem. However, wise Jehoshabeath took it upon herself to hide her brother's young son -- Joash -- in the Temple for a period of six years. During that time, the high priest Jehoiada secretly worked against evil Athaliah,

until Joash was finally declared the new king. In the end, Athaliah -- and anyone who was loyal to her -- were finally executed. Such was ancient Jewish politics. Murder was in their blood.

Obviously, many hundreds of years later, wicked King Herod was no different. Murder was in his blood as well. In fact, the historical record states that by his orders, his wife Mariamne was executed, as were two of his sons. Furthermore, he had his previous wife, Doris, and her young son Antipater banished, so that he could marry Mariamne, win favor with the Jews -- he was actually an Idumaeen, or Edomite -- and also manipulate his way to the Jewish throne. As we read in part one, King Herod was troubled by the news which the wise men brought to him. It seems obvious to me that the reason why he was so troubled, was because the news of a new king arising meant potential competition to the throne, and Herod was not about to allow that to happen.

But the question is this: Why did Herod set the age limit at two years? If Jesus was still a baby laying in a manger when the Magi arrived from the East, as many Hollywood movies like to depict, then it does not make any sense for King Herod to do this. However, on the other hand, if the wise men had been traveling from the East for a period of several years as we have seen, then it makes perfect sense that Jesus would be about two years old, and would now be living in a house with His parents at the time that the Magi arrived. This explains why Herod ordered his soldiers to search out any child which was two years and younger in age. Consider these verses:

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."
Matthew 2:16-18, KJV

It is plain to see then that evil Herod's decision to have his men murder all children under two years of age was based on "the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men". As Matthew explains, Herod's murderous actions were a direct fulfillment of a prophecy which had been uttered by the Prophet Jeremiah -- who is referred to as Jeremy in the previous verses -- over four hundred years earlier. That prophecy is the following:

"Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border."
Jeremiah 31:15-17, KJV

As you may know, the Scriptures inform us that having been warned by an Angel of the Lord in a dream to flee from evil King Herod and his murderous ways, Joseph took his wife Mary and the young child Jesus, and fled to Egypt. They remained there until Herod the Great died -- which is believed to have occurred between 4 BC and 1 BC -- after which time, they did in fact return to Israel -- and to Nazareth in particular -- where Jesus grew up. Consider the following verses:

"And when they [the Magi] were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son . . . But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee: And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene."

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23, KJV

As I stated a moment ago, these events reveal God's amazing Wisdom and Foresight. By His design and thoughtful planning, He revealed the birth of His Son to the Magi, who persevered for several years until they found the young boy Jesus. Not only did they honor the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, but through their expensive gifts, they also provided His parents with the financial means to make an unanticipated and quick escape to Egypt, where they remained until the death of King Herod. For all we know, as a result of wicked Herod's orders, Joseph and Mary may have had to drop everything, and flee with only the clothes on their backs, and a few belongings. After all, Bethlehem was not far from Jerusalem.

Perhaps the gifts of the Magi enabled them to live in Egypt in relative comfort until the time arrived for them to return to Israel. In fact, while it is just speculation, maybe there was even enough money left so that Joseph was able to start a carpentry business once they arrived in the northern village of Nazareth. The point is, God used these strangers from the East to provide for His children in the most unexpected way.

While we may not know much about Joseph, other than the fact that he was a carpenter by trade, one thing which is clearly made evident by his actions is that he was a man of faith. Imagine if you had a dream as he did. How quick would you be to believe that it actually came from God? How quick would you be to obey it, no matter how crazy it seemed? As we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he

that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."
Hebrews 11:6, KJV

With these thoughts I will bring this series to a close. I trust that you have found it informative and enlightening, and I pray that it has been a blessing in your life. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would really appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this series, or which are related to this series, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net web server:

Alien Life, Extrasolar Planets and Universal Atonement
As a Thief in the Night? Not for Me!
Horde From Hell, China, Turkey and the Kings of the East
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word
Sorry . . . Jesus is Not Coming at Any Moment
The Misguided End of the World Predictions of Harold Camping

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