



Behold The Christmas Star, 2020!

By WB Lee Anderson

I want you to keep in mind December 21st 2020. This year's date for the start of Winter Solstice and so much more. But we'll get to that in a moment.

It's the Holiday Season, and we all have visions of Christmas. Silhouettes of three regally attired men on camelback. The trio gazing across gently rolling dunes of white to a distant, solitary vision of a village in the distance. A dark sky with a single shaft of light beaming down to illuminate a building with a soft light glowing inside. Well, hello Christmas Card company!

For many of us, this vision of "The Star" is our mental picture of Christmas. However, in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 2 verses 1-12, we find the only place a star is ever mentioned. This should give us pause. How much of this is real? Matthew wasn't there. And the Gospel was written ninety years after the death of Christ.

Enter modern technology and the ability to recreate the night sky from 7 BCE to 2 BCE. Why these dates? First, we have to have some idea when Christ may have actually been born. Biblical clues, as well as, astrological events may help us to narrow this down.

Biblically we know he was born before the death of Harrod the Great. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, Harrod probably died in 1 BCE. There were several

astrological events that took place shortly before Herod's death that lead up to what may have been considered "The Star".

It could have been a Nova or a Supernova. Chinese astronomers record the episode of one around 7 BCE, however, no one else shows documentation of it. "The Star" could have been a comet. Archives show the appearance of Halley's Comet in 5 BCE. But comets were considered a bad omen, a harbinger of doom. Comets move across the sky, they don't stop, and they're only visible for around seventy days. Nonetheless, most classical depictions of the Nativity depict "The Star" as a comet.

One of the most logical explanations is a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. Their orbital paths came close enough together to appear as one brilliantly bright star. Add to that sight, another astronomical event, the addition of the Star of Regulus. Between September 3rd BCE and June 2 BCE, Jupiter appeared to be passed by Regulus, it then appeared to reverse itself to pass Regulus again. Finally, Jupiter turned back, passing Regulus for a third time.

In astrology, Jupiter is known as the Knightly planet and Regulus is the King Star. All these astronomical anomalies occurred under the Constellation Leo, the lion. Coincidentally, the lion is also the sign for the Tribe of Judah. The movement of Regulus appeared to crown Jupiter. Certainly this would have been a wonder that the Magi would not be able to ignore. All of these events, the Nova, the comet and the usual

conjunction, all took place in a period of about four years, which in astronomical terms, is a very short time.

This year, we will get to see a very rare event. One that hasn't been seen in almost 800 years. On December 21st, Jupiter and Saturn will once again align so closely that they will appear as one. This occurrence will be on the first day of the Winter Solstice. The last time a convergence like this took place was on March 4th, 1226. Look to the southwest about forty-five minutes after sunset to see the planets align. They will be visible as they approach and depart, which will be about three days before and after the 21st.

Have a happy Holiday Season, a very blessed Christmas, and be ever mindful of the "Reason for the Season".