

The Magi and the Star

“What everyone was expecting around the time when Jesus was born”

The popular picture of Jesus' birth is very misleading. We see the nativity creche with shepherds, Magi, animals gathered around and angels singing above. It is a lovely picture, pastoral bliss. The real picture, well known from the historical records, is far different. Inside the little home was the peace of God's presence. Outside there was great agitation.

We read that the Magi saw a star and came “seeking him who was born King of the Jews” and the King Herod was upset. The celestial events are well known and the historians record the times.

The four close together celestial events were of the highest significance. First were the once in 900 year triple conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces: late May, late September, early December in 7 B.C.E. That was immediately followed by the once in 800 year grouping of Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn in Pisces in February 6 BCE.¹ How often does a once in 800 year and a once in 900 year event happen together? The stars and planets were considered messengers of the gods. The Scripture also calls them God's messengers. Pisces was associated with the Jewish people in astrology. Jupiter was the “star” of royalty and luck and Saturn was the star of the Mesopotamian deity who protected Israel. Mars was associated with war and death. Everyone, especially the paranoid Herod, expected something to happen.

At that time 7 - 6 BCE Josephus² records that Pharisees predicted the downfall of Herod and his whole house and the coming of the Messiah with signs and wonders. They prophesied that Herod's eunuch Bagoas would be healed and father children. They gained many adherents. Through the women and courtiers, the hope spread in the palace of the “usurper on the throne of David” Herod. He killed everyone who was pleased with the prophecy. Six thousand Pharisees were killed and poor Bagoas also. It is not surprising the later slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem was not considered worthy of notice.

Near the beginning of this the Scripture records Zachariah served at morning worship. An angel announced his aged wife would be the mother of John, the forerunner of the Messiah. When Zachariah came out of the Temple and stood on the doorway, he could not talk. Everyone knew something happened inside. Nine months later barren old Elizabeth miraculously gave birth. Everyone knew the connection. God had given His message.

Much is known about Temple worship that morning There was only one place of worship for the city Jerusalem - the Temple of God. Culturally nothing could begin until morning worship was over. The High Priest, Simon ben Boethus, all of the religious leaders had to be there. If they were in the city, King Herod, all of the government officials had to attend, along with all the great rabbis, bureaucrats, shopkeepers, the pious men and women. The Temple courts were the university. All the teachers and their students were there. Many tens of thousands were at morning worship. The Temple courts were being expanded from being able to hold 150,000 to hold over 250,000. When the Temple construction was finished in 66 AD. after 80 years of work, 18,000 workers and 1000 draft oxen were laid off.³ Most of them would have been there, waiting so they could begin work.

When Zachariah appeared on the Temple porch waving his arms, all the officials of the Temple and Nation were in the front rows. When Elizabeth delivered the miracle child John, nine months later, all the great ones were very, very interested. Six months after the angel spoke to Zachariah, it was the blessed virgin Mary's turn. Six months after John was born, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Forty days later He was presented in the Temple. It is possible that Simeon did not make public what he said to Mary privately. However Anna the prophetess who lived in the Temple did not speak to Mary or Joseph. She made great excited proclamation giving thanks to God and speaking of the newborn Messiah to all who were awaiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. There were tens of thousands around in the Temple. Joseph and Mary were to go back to their families in Nazareth. Before they left, the Magi came asking "Where is he who was born King of the Jews?"

Everyone knew God was in action.

In this the Magi did not leave soon after the celestial signs began. What delayed them? The long time from beginning to end explains why Herod ordered all born in the last two years killed. The word "star" is not an exact correspondence to multiple signs. Is that a real issue?

For more see:

This is a supplement for the life of Jesus "King of Kings" <http://thesignofconcord.com>
<http://www.newagegod.com/STARmedia/starletter2.htm>
<https://members.bib-arch.org/bible-review/17/6/8> This is best but behind a paywall.

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¹ An Astronomical Perspective <http://www.astronomynotes.com/history/bethlehem-star.html>

² Josephus Antiquities of the Jews" 17:2.4 <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/ant-17.htm> .

³ Josephus Antiquities of the Jews" 20.219