

Sunday, January 10, 2021 - Baptism of the Lord



Was the Star of Bethlehem Actually an Angel?

Greetings!

Just a few weeks ago – on December 21st to be exact – **the planets of Jupiter and Saturn** became aligned in the heavens so that they looked like one huge “double planet” or star that could be seen by the naked eye – wow!

Some dubbed it a *once-in-ten-lifetimes* celestial event (for the mathematically-challenged, that’s about 800 years.)

Others were claiming that **all-powerful science** finally revealed the mystery of the Christmas Star that the Magi followed 2000 years ago – yay!

And, of course, 2020 has shown us that the judgment of science is always...hmm, infallible...right?

An article at astronomy.com discussed the Star of Bethlehem at length and seemed to rule out the possibility of the Star being a meteor, an exploding supernova, or even a comet.

So, **the conclusion** must be that the Star of Bethlehem was actually a couple of bright planets in single file.

Well, pardon me...*but I'm not buying it.*

To be sure, no one is denying the amazing planetary phenomenon that occurred in the heavens on 12/21, but there could be an alternative explanation for the Star of Bethlehem.

Here are a few reasons for thinking otherwise.

A mind of its own

The Gospel of Matthew says **the Star “appeared” at one critical point in history** and then seemed to have an uncanny ability to track human activity as well as a curiously independent sense of motion.

“And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was” (Matthew 2:9).

Do stars that have been around for millions of years just “appear”? Then it “preceded” them, moved to another place and...“stopped”?!

It seems a bit strange that a material sphere bound by the laws of physics should be able to go where it

wants, when it wants.

That movement happened – coincidentally – **right after the Magi had their audience with Herod** whose advisors told him that the Messiah was to be born “in Bethlehem of Judea” (there was another Bethlehem in Galilee so they had to be specific about the location).

How did the Star know that it should then shift its position five miles to the west over an obscure little village named “House of Bread” (Bethlehem) versus shooting some eighty miles north of Herod’s palace to Bethlehem in Galilee?

Odd. **Was it listening in on that meeting?**

This Star clearly had a mind of its own and an amazing sense of direction.

Angels and fire

I’ve always had a personal theory about the Star of Bethlehem that’s based on the angelic nature – which can be described as a sort of *spiritual fire*.

[Author’s note: I’ve got a book coming out on this subject in a few months – stay tuned!]

This becomes apparent when you connect the dots and realize **how often angels are associated with fire in the Bible:**

- The angel that stood guard over Eden held a fiery sword (Genesis 3:24)
- An angel appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush (Exodus 2:23ff.)
- An angel went up in flames with the sacrifice of Gideon (Judges 6:21)
- Elijah was taken up to heaven by angels in chariots of fire (2 Kings 2:11)
- Isaiah’s Seraphim purged his prophetic lips with fire (Isaiah 6:7)
- An angel is in charge of the fiery altar of incense in heaven (Revelation 8:5)

Well, I could go on, but you get the point.

Here’s my theory in a nutshell.

The Star of Bethlehem was a real live angel who appeared in the form of a burning sphere of celestial fire in the heavens to attract the Magi to Jerusalem and signal the birthplace of the Messiah.

My theory is non-scientific, of course, but I’m guessing it’s **just about as credible** as the idea that Jupiter and Saturn aligned on the exact day the Three Kings met with Herod and somehow magically positioned themselves over Bethlehem like a mystical GPS for a couple visiting dignitaries...

If the Star of Bethlehem was an angel, it would explain a great deal about the story:

1. Angels have minds of their own (they think with God’s mind, that is);
2. Angels go exactly *where* they are sent by God;
3. Angels appear precisely *when* God wants them to appear; and
4. Angels are God’s messengers, “to light and guard, to rule and guide” us to Christ, as our beloved Guardian Angel prayer notes.

It answers all the relevant questions:

An angel “arising in the East” as a sign to the star-gazing wise men of the pagan nations?

No problem for spiritual beings. We might say the heavens are their natural habitat. (When they appear on earth they are just visitors from another dimension.)

An angel burning brightly in the heaven?

When you are *literally made of (spiritual) fire*, this is all in a day’s work.

Guiding and enlightening men of authentic faith?

Piece of cake. This is an angel's job.

The only one who didn't get the message was the murderous Herod. Once the Magi had been led to the Baby Jesus by the external sign of a star, they were guided by the inner Spirit after that encounter and escaped Herod's rage.

The angel got them to Christ and back safely.

He accomplished his multi-faceted mission perfectly – as angels do.

Which angel was it?

Then there's the question of identity.

God is free to designate any of His wondrous angels for the purpose of leading the Magi to Christ. He would have bestowed the **needed visual qualities** so the fiery angel would stand out in the star-filled heavens.

He could even have endowed the angel with the **necessary mystical qualities** that would have made it an object of fascination for pagans.

But which angel, specifically, was called to this task? We won't know the answer to that question this side of heaven, but here are a few candidates:

- **The most exalted Seraph** – the Seraphim are the highest order of angels and are already burning (their name actually means “burning ones”);
- **The angel who took Satan's place after the Fall** – now, that would have been quite fitting – the name Lucifer means “light bearer” – perhaps this one was the angel closest to Lucifer at the time of the apostasy and God rewarded him for his fidelity;
- **The guardian angel of the earth** – this is a distinct guardian angel job for some singular angel;
- **The protector of Israel** – which would have been none other than St. Michael the Archangel himself (although, personally I think Michael is kind of overworked and probably didn't need another job...);
- **The angel of the city of Bethlehem** – if the little village was designated from all time to be the birthplace of the Messiah, would the Lord have given it just an *ordinary* guardian angel?

Since there is no doctrinal teaching on this matter, we are free to speculate on a fascinating subject. Angels, too, are *sacred windows*.

But what is true in every age is that *inquiring minds wonder* – about the “Star of Wonder”!

I hope I've given you a lot to think about on this last day of the Christmas season!

Our feature articles

Speaking of angels...

...our feature today is the dramatic story of an angelic intervention in a **Baptism that took place “in the nick of time”**, so to speak.

It is incredibly inspirational and includes the eyewitness account of the good priest who performed the Baptism himself.

The Angel Who Ordered An Emergency Baptism



Who Taught Leonardo to Paint?

Our second feature article is about the man who taught Leonardo da Vinci how to paint. It examines his painting of the Baptism of Christ so it fits our feast day perfectly!



Let the astounding graces of Baptism lead us forth into the turbulence of 2021!

Thank you again!

My prayers go to all the Sacred Windows readers and your families in this new year.

Peter Darcy

PS-1 – Remember: I post one article a week on the Sacred Windows website and send out this newsletter every two weeks – on Sundays.

*PS-2– Please **forward our newsletter** to anyone you think may benefit from a burst of Beauty-Truth-Goodness inspiration.*



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