**Prophecy Lesson 2 – Conjunction Background – the astronomy Part 2**
**(December 7, 2020)**

Continuing the discussion where we left off in Lesson 1, the rarity of the upcoming major Jupiter Saturn conjunction is significant because nothing like it has happened in the past 800 years (1226 AD). There have only been about 300 Jupiter Saturn conjunctions in the past 6,000 years (since the Creation) so the 21 December J-S conjunction is far more than just a "once in a lifetime" opportunity for those who take time to observe it. No one alive has ever seen a Jupiter Saturn conjunction like this. The last Jupiter Saturn conjunction In May 2000 happened in daylight and the closest separation between the planets was about 1.2 degrees. In the previous lesson I indicated that "few people have ever observed a significant or major Venus Jupiter conjunction". I actually meant to say that few people have ever seen a major Venus Jupiter conjunction and only the wise men and those alive (throughout the Roman Empire) at the time (in 2 BC) who saw the Christmas Star conjunction have ever observed an extraordinary Venus Jupiter conjunction. This is because only four extraordinary Venus Jupiter conjunctions, out of nearly 7,000 such conjunctions to appear in the past 6,000 years, have occurred (in 3438 BC, 1128 BC, 2 BC and 732 AD) and, there are no extraordinary Venus Jupiter conjunctions scheduled to appear in the next 2,000 years (none before 4164 AD). This is why zero percent (actually about 0.0004) of all Venus Jupiter conjunctions (past and future) are classified - Extraordinary.

The separation distance between planets in conjunctions is a center to center measurement. This means that conjunctions with less than one tenth (.1) of a degree of separation distance between them, like the 21 December J-S conjunction, will likely appear to the naked eye as a single star. If you observed the planets in the past few days you can now better appreciate the issue of brightness. The apparent magnitude of brightness' of the planets we're currently observing are: Jupiter: -2, Saturn: +0.64 and Venus: -4, which means that Jupiter is about 6 times brighter than Saturn and Venus is currently about 6.3 times brighter than Jupiter and about 39 times brighter than Saturn. Most conjunctions (all conjunctions involving Venus) are only visible during the last three hours before sunrise or during the first three hours after sunset (when they are less than 45 degrees above the horizon).

Although the apparent magnitude of brightness of the planets remains fairly constant, sky conditions (time of day and atmospherics) can significantly impact a planet's or conjunction's appearance in the morning or evening sky. The conjunctions in the photos below (12 Aug 3BC and 27 Aug 2016) were visible when they were between 20-25 degrees from the sun (within 2 hours of sunrise or sunset) thus, the bluish twilight background significantly diminishes their brilliance.

Jerusalem, Israel

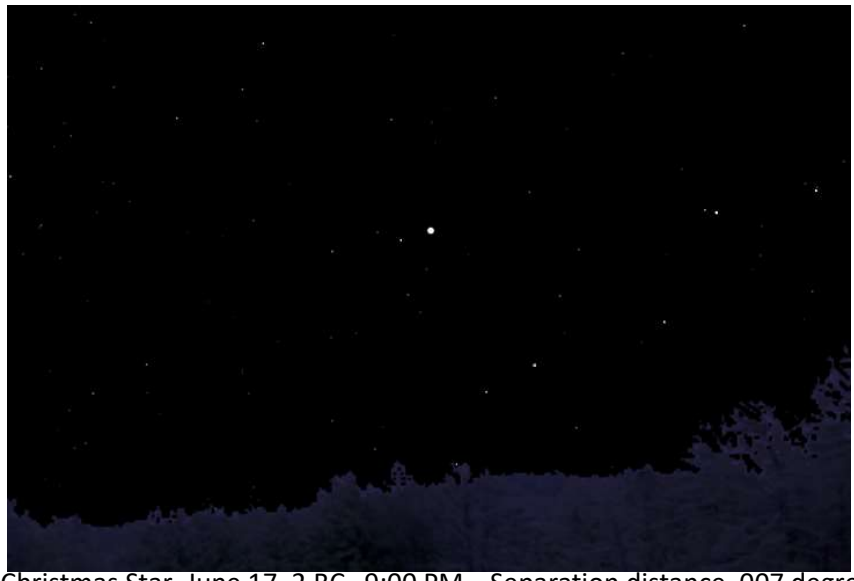
12 Aug 3 BC Venus Jupiter conj. (.072 deg. sep)

Hamilton, Bermuda

27 Aug 2016 Venus Jupiter conj. (.067 deg. sep)

By comparison, the Christmas Star conjunction, below, formed when the planets were 45 degrees from the sun (making it visible for the full 3 hours after sunset) so it has a very dark background (essentially black), making the conjunction significantly more brilliant than the others which were closer to the Sun.

Jerusalem, Israel



The Christmas Star, June 17, 2 BC 9:00 PM Separation distance .007 degrees

Atmospherics play a significant role in a star or conjunction's brilliance and appearance. Despite how impressive Venus and the Jupiter Saturn conjunction will appear in December 2020, they cannot compare with what the wise men saw in the skies and conditions that existed in the arid desert environment of the Middle East at the time of the Christmas Star appearance. The smoke, haze and pollution that exists in our atmosphere today greatly diminishes what we see in the night skies (especially here in CA during wild fire season) when compared with the clear, arid skies of the Middle East. I had the opportunity to view the night sky in Petra, Jordan during my 2010 trip to Israel and, it was nothing like anything I have ever seen here in California. Below is a photo of the Milky Way taken from Masada, Israel in 2015 that might help clarify the differences in sky conditions.

The view is looking from east to west. I'm not sure what the background light source is (maybe the tail end of the sunset) but the sky is magnificent. The stars appear to touch the tops of the mountains and ridges. That's what I remember from Petra. In the photo, there are several Milky Way stars (or galaxies) that appear to be small, yet impressive Christmas like stars. In our current December sky, while Jupiter and Saturn stand out as the major visible celestial objects in the SW sky, imagine trying to pick Jupiter and Saturn out in the sky over Masada and observe them for a couple of weeks as they form the conjunction. The point is that what we see with the naked eye in the night skies today, while still impressive, is difficult to compare with what observers like the wise men saw in their part of the world 2,000 years ago.

In The Christmas Star DVD, **http://thechristmasstar.org/TheChristmasStar/watch-it-here/** , I identify seven heavenly signs that comprise God's astronomy version of the nativity story. In the next few lessons, I will address the three most critical of these signs, each of which was necessary to fulfill Scripture: the "heads up" sign that made the wise men aware of Christ's birth (or pending birth); The sign that motivated the wise men to depart their home in the east and go to Israel; and the star the wise men followed from Jerusalem to Bethlehem on the day of Jesus' birth.

I will conclude this lesson by answering the question people have been asking since the star appeared 2,022 years ago: What was the Christmas star and how am I so certain that I know what it was? The simple answer is: The Bible tells me so! The longer answer is: 1) In Numbers 24:17 Balaam prophesies, "*I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A Star will rise out of Jacob; a Sceptor will rise out of Israel…"* This verse is a clear prophecy about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, and he is referred to as a "Star" (capitalized). 2) At the very end of the Bible, Christ himself tells us, "…*I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." (*Revelation 22:16). In the song titled: The Names of Jesus, one of His names is The Bright Morning Star. In his notes on the Revelation 22:16 passage, Dr. Henry Morris makes a clear and convincing case that the only star ever referred to throughout history as the bright morning star is the planet, Venus. Venus, the brightest object in the sky (morning and evening) after the Sun and Moon, is the Christ star! Why would the Lord choose an object of lesser significance to be His Star? Some believe and have claimed that the planet Jupiter was the Christmas star, but there is no Scriptural evidence to support such a claim. Even so, Jupiter plays a major role in the story because it converges with Venus twice in the nativity story to transform the Christ Star into the Christmas Star. Others believe God's "Shekinah glory" was the Christmas star. I address why the Shekinah could not have been the Christmas star in the following article: http://thatwebhostguy.com/ChristmasStar/TheChristmasStar/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/IsthShekinahtheChristmasStar.pdf.

Finally, the two most important reasons why the 17 June 2 BC Venus Jupiter conjunction was the Christmas star are 1) no other recordable celestial event so accurately and completely fulfills the nativity Scriptures. 2) The date of the Christmas Star appearance establishes a precise and accurate chronology for the First Advent of Jesus Christ (17 June 2 BC – 15 May 33 AD) that fits accurately and completely with Scripture and history. In the course of the next few lessons, I will make the case that these claims are true.