

Prophecy Lesson 3 - Venus - the Christ Star (December 10,2020)

As we embark on this amazing Christmas Star journey, I thought I'd share something important about my morning walks involving Venus, the Christ star, particularly on my walk this morning. My hope is that you might better understand and appreciate why I believe the Lord chose Venus, the bright morning and evening star and the Christ star out of all the celestial objects in His creation. Every morning I take our dogs on a 1-1.5 mile walk around the ranch. The walks are especially enjoyable for me when Venus is the morning star. Venus became the morning star in early to mid June 2020 after passing between the Sun and the Earth. By early August the planet was more than 40 degrees ahead of the Sun (rising in the east as early as 3 am) where it pretty much remained until late Sept/early Oct when it began its trek back towards the Sun.

This morning, Venus rose above the eastern horizon at about 5:30 AM. Currently, the planet is only about 22 degrees from the Sun, so to the casual observer, Venus is only visible with the naked eye for about an hour and fifteen minutes from the time it rises until it fades into the morning light about 30 minutes before sunrise (sunrise was about 7:15 this morning). Since discovering the major role Venus plays as the day star in the nativity story in 2014, I've prided myself in seeing how close to sunrise I can still see the star before it fades into the white morning sky. I'll be discussing this issue in more detail in an upcoming lesson.

I want to share what I noticed on this morning's walk as it relates to what was discussed in lesson 2 regarding atmospheric conditions and the visibility of stars. Lately, I've been starting my walks 30-40 minutes before sunrise after it becomes light enough to see where I'm going. Today's walk started earlier, at 6:15 (it was significantly darker than usual but still light enough to see) about an hour before sunrise, because I wanted to update and mark the spots and references along my route where I can observe Venus. During the summer when Venus didn't notably change position on a daily basis (and when it wasn't obscured by smoke) my reference points remained pretty consistent for a week or more. But now, Venus' location in the morning sky at specific times changes almost daily.

As I began this morning's walk, it was clear skies with no clouds. The sky was perfectly dark blue as it lightened toward the eastern horizon and Venus was shining brilliantly in the SE sky (about 15 degrees above the horizon) while the crescent moon, higher and about 30 degrees to the west, shone brightly as well. About five minutes into the walk it happened. Remember, it was about an hour before sunrise and still pretty dark. As I observed the panorama of the sky from east to south, it struck me that nothing else was visible in that bright, dark sky except Venus and the Moon. Not a single star. During the summer, Sirius, the brightest star, was occasionally visible in the SW sky at the start of my walks, but by this morning it had already settled below the western horizon. I looked around to the north to see if any of the stars in the northern constellations, the Big Dipper or any stars in the western sky were visible. But there was nothing. So, there I was, out in the middle of a beautiful, clear, cold morning, nearly an hour before sunrise and the sky was virtually empty. I thought about the photo of the night sky over Masada presented in lesson 2 and how full the night sky was of God's glory. But, here in Mountain Ranch on a dark, clear morning, nearly an hour before sunrise, all of God's glory had faded into the early morning light, all except for Venus, the Christ star and the Moon. When my gaze returned to Venus, shining ever so brightly, it appeared as if it would never diminish or go away and - I could feel Christ's presence. It seemed that the Lord, through the star, was reminding me that while everything else may fade away, He was saying, "I am your rock, and your salvation. I will never fade away". It brought to mind the words of the hymn, *Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full at his wonderful face. And the things*

of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and Grace. Christ, through Venus, provided that glory and grace for me this morning.

I share this with you because I know there are some who might be skeptical about the Christmas star story about to be presented, even though it's based on a literal interpretation of Scripture. So, I would very much encourage those with doubts to take advantage of this opportunity to observe the morning sky and determine for yourself whether or not Venus is the Christ or Messiah star. I recommend finding a spot with a good view of the eastern and southeastern sky, then spend some time observing Venus and the morning sky (preferably between 6-6:30 AM). After checking out the morning sky turn your attention back to Venus, and while gazing at the star, ask yourself this question, "If I were God, and could choose any celestial object to be the heavenly sign that lets the world know that Christ, our salvation, became one of us and that it would become a perpetual reminder of Christ's presence with and in us and that He will never leave or forsake us, what celestial object would you choose?" I'm reminded of the promise God gave Noah when He established the rainbow as His covenant promise to never again destroy the world with water. My hope and prayer in these next few lessons is to make the case that God not only chose Venus to be the Christ Star, but that He was fully capable of temporarily turning the Christ star, with help from Jupiter, into a once in history appearance of the Christmas Star.