

The Christmas Star

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Luke 2.1 - 20

This week a much heralded phenomena took place in the heavens above – *The Great Conjunction*. If you have been following this event in the news you know what I am talking about. In case you have no idea, *The Great Conjunction* took place on Monday evening when the planets of Jupiter and Saturn aligned so that when viewed from earth they appeared in the sky as one. It is the closest the planets have been together since 1623, but the last time such a close alignment occurred and was visible on earth was March 3, 1226. While the two planets appear as one, they are still 734 million km apart. Unfortunately, due to cloud cover we were unable to see this rather rare and spectacular event. However, 4 days earlier I happened to be walking across our yard shortly after sunset; the sky was clear and I marveled at all the stars God had hung in their places to display His glory. As my gaze moved to the southwest I was quickly reminded of the highly anticipated alignment of Jupiter and Saturn. Just above the horizon was Jupiter, the nearer and brighter of the two, and Saturn slightly above and to the left. A similar view was possible last evening as the planets begin to diverge, but unfortunately the sky wasn't nearly as clear.

In the preamble to this amazing event, *The Great Conjunction*, has been dubbed by some as the, *Christmas Star*, or *Bethlehem Star*. They associated this phenomena with the star God used to direct the Wise Men from the east to Bethlehem. While it is more likely God supernaturally provided a “special star” for that event, the association draws global attention to the arrival of Jesus Christ more than 2,000 years ago. Thoughts of the arrival of Jesus and His provision of peace and joy surely lift the hopes and spirits of people at a time when millions are feeling alone and isolated as they obey the direction of authorities and spend Christmas alone rather than surrounded by family and friends. It is rather providential that God arranged Jupiter and Saturn to align in this manner right before Christmas as a reminder of the watershed moment when Jesus Christ arrived on earth clothing Himself with humanity at Bethlehem.

While Jupiter and Saturn noticeably stood out in the sky, their brilliance is nothing compared to that of the *Angel of the Lord* who appeared to the most unlikely group of people – shepherds watching their flocks. Imagine, as best as you can, that moment in time when the *Angel of the Lord* appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. A moment earlier the sky was dark and the shepherds moved about in the darkness, but in an instant, without any warning, that darkness was pushed aside by the brightest of Light glowing from God Himself. Of all the people on earth, the lowly shepherds had been chosen by God to be the first to hear the announcement that Jesus had come.

Luke 2:10 (ESV) And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

People had been waiting for more than 4,000 years for news of the Redeemer. The *Messiah, Christ the Lord*, had arrived.

Luke 2:11 (ESV) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Heaven couldn't be silent, nor could it contain the magnitude of what had just happened. God's plan of redemption was unfolding. No wonder the *Angel of the Lord* was joined by a multitude of heavenly host praising God and declaring,

Luke 2:14 (ESV) "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

One moment the countryside was brilliantly illuminated and filled with the sound of angels singing, and the next it was plunged back into darkness and grew silent. The angels were gone! But an indelible moment had been etched upon the hearts of the shepherds by the news of the Savior's birth. They listened to the message of the angels; they believed what they had been told, and headed to Bethlehem to see the Messiah.

One may have expected the first announcement of the arrival of Jesus – the Messiah, would have been delivered to the religious leaders and they could dispense the news. Or if not them, perhaps to some devout and righteous person like Simeon who longed for the Messiah (2.25-26) or the prophetess, Anna, who also patiently waited for the fulfillment of God's promise of redemption (2.36-38). Instead it was to lowly shepherds, perhaps the most despised and marginalized people in society at the time; they would be the first to be entrusted with the news.

Undoubtedly embedded in God's choice of the shepherds is the truth that all people are invited to embrace Jesus as their Savior. No one is excluded because of social standing, gender, ethnicity, education, race, material prosperity, nor any other designation. Jesus came as the Savior of all.

Romans 10:13 (ESV) For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Most of you will spend Christmas a bit differently from previous years. Due to COVID restrictions many will need to forego get-togethers with family and friends. Christmas this year also presents an opportunity to focus with greater intentionality on the greatest gift represented by Christmas – Jesus Christ – the Light of the world.

If anyone reading this hasn't personally placed your faith and trust in Jesus for salvation from your sins, do so today. Believe the Gospel message and receive the free gift of eternal life by faith.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (ESV) 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

While Jupiter and Saturn have been referred to as the *Christmas Star* or *Star of Bethlehem*, they are not stars at all. While they appear to emit light, they don't produce any whatsoever, they only reflect light from the sun. But by contrast, the true *Star of Bethlehem*, Jesus Christ is the Source of light.

Consider some of the following verses which refer to Jesus as the Light:

John 1:9 (ESV) The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

John 3:19 (ESV) And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

"I am the light of the world," is the second of Jesus' great "I AM's." **John 8:12** (ESV) Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 12:46 (ESV) I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

The means by which people enter into a relationship with Jesus is through the Gospel which is also described as *light*.

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the **light of the gospel** of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Consider this also, those whose faith and trust is in Jesus for their salvation, become the *light* in their communities.

Matthew 5:14 (ESV) "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

We are light to others. First to our families, and then to the community of God's people – the Church, and finally to the watching world. May you be uplifted by an intentional focus on Christ as the Light of Bethlehem, but also on your role as a light to others.

No Christmas Eve seems complete without singing *Silent Night*. The first link below is Silent Night sung by Chris Tomlin - with Kristyn Getty as narrator

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pEndgvJe2s&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO

For those who want to listen to *Silent Night* in German, I have included a link to *Stille Nacht* with German lyrics sung by Peter Alexander

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZejQPCAjot0&ab_channel=%F0%9D%94%87%F0%9D%94%A2%F0%9D%94%AB%F0%9D%94%A6%F0%9D%94%B0%F0%9D%94%A2