

Lessons from the Wise Men

What was the Star?

*Wise men from the East
came to Jerusalem... we
have seen His star in the
East – Matthew 2:1-2*

Who were the Wise Men?

Who were the Wise Men?

- Probably founded by Balaam around 1400 BC
- Prophetic messengers - word *magos* – a sacred caste - Zoroastrian cult astrologers by 600 BC
- The cult “magi” (magic) misused the “signs in the heavens” as astrology (or fatalism)
- But... *after* Daniel’s influence, many became believers who were court astronomers looking for the “sign of the coming one” – the Messiah!

The Prophecy of a “Star”



- Israel was reaching its peak of influence
- Balak asked Balaam to curse Israel...
- Offered more money, he then goes...
- God opens the mouth of his donkey
- He can only speak what God gave him

In his fourth oracle, he said *a star shall come out of Jacob (Judah), and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel...*

One shall have dominion – Numbers 22:17, 19

Daniel's "School of the Magi"

- Daniel was put in charge of the "magi" (2:46-49)
- Daniel 2:48 – *Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief (captain) administrator (governor) over all the wise men (magus) of Babylon*
- Prepared God's people for captivity (70 year exile)
- Interpreted dreams of the coming Messiah
- Prophecy of 70 weeks – March 5, 444 (decree) to March 30, 33 AD (Christ crucified)

Daniel's legacy and life:

Daniel 12:3 – those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever

The background of the slide features a dramatic sunset sky with silhouettes of three camels and their riders. A bright, multi-pointed star is visible in the upper left quadrant of the sky. The overall scene is dark, with the warm colors of the sunset providing a backdrop for the silhouettes.

Behold wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” – Matthew 2:1-2

Prophecies of Messiah's Birth

- If his death can be determined, the time of birth as well
- A child of a virgin in Bethlehem – Is. 7:14; 9:6, Micah 5:2
- Balaam's prophecy – Numbers 24:17 – *a star shall come out of Jacob (tribe of Judah); a scepter (king) shall rise out of Israel*
- Zoroastres, of Zoroastrian cult - ancient book - “Messiah shall be revealed, a bright and shining star shall arise in the east”
- Judah's tribe was associated with *Leo* (the lion)
- The Wise men believed a star would arise in the constellation *Leo* at the time of Messiah's birth

The Magi began their journey when they saw His star “in the East”



The Star could have been a
super nova – explosion
lasting only a few months or
totally supernatural!

*... or God could have
confirmed His providential
timing through the
astronomical signs of the
Zodiac well known by the
Magi for generations!*



Signs in the Heavens – Law of Nature

What did the Wise Men believe they meant?

- Genesis 1:14 - *...let them be for signs (of one to come) and seasons, and for days and years*
- Psalm 19:1-4 - *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge.*
- The heavens are a sign of Christ to come, *not a fatal determination of our destiny (astrology)*

The Ancient Zodiac



The
Path of
the Sun

Leo

Virgo

The signs of the Zodiac (constellations) could not have been understood without the Revelation of the Scriptures!

The Ancient Sphinx of Giza – 2578 BC

The body of a Lion
(Leo)

The head of a Woman
(Virgo)



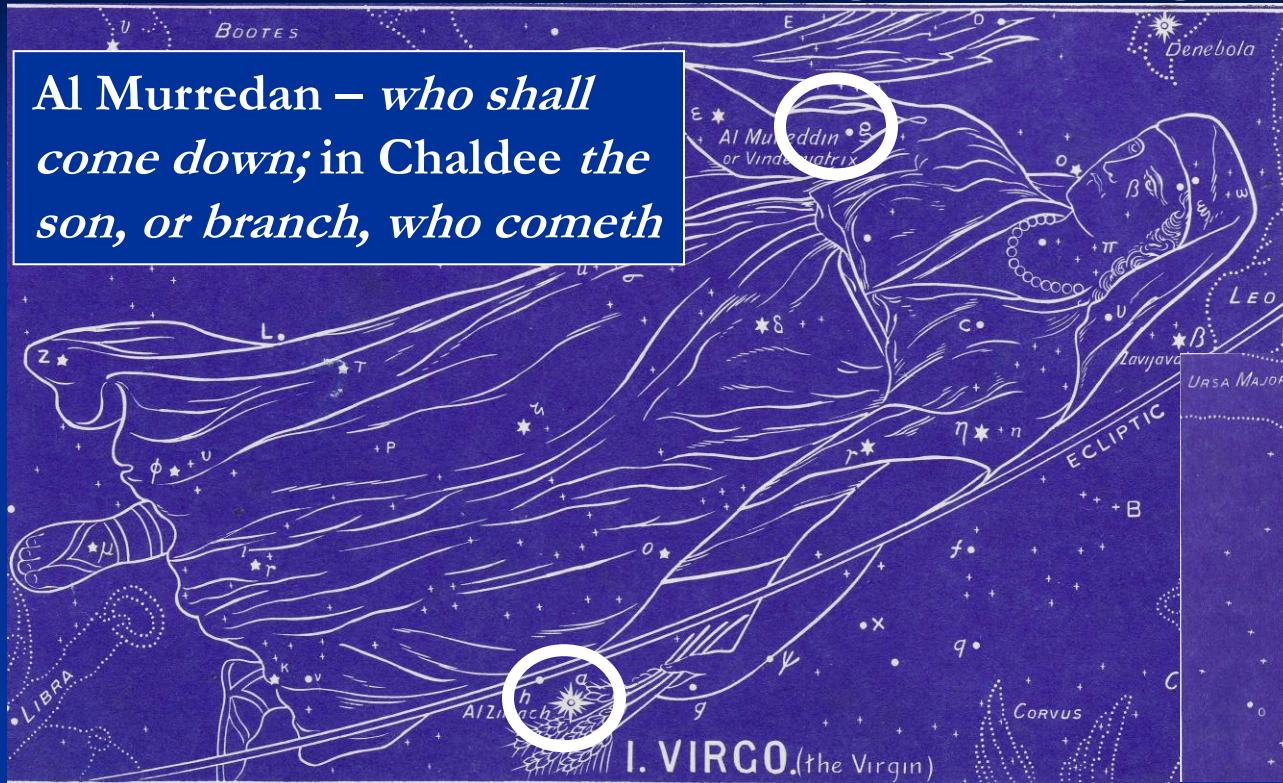
Adam, Seth and Enoch the first astronomers

- Constellations a circular picture book (Ps. 19)
beginning with Virgo, ending with Leo
- Stars were given ancient names (Ps. 147:4)
- Regulus (treading under foot), in Leo (a king)
- Planet Jupiter (associated with kings)
- Virgo (a virgin), with Al Zimach (the branch)
- Planet Venus (associated with motherhood)

The Constellation Virgo – *a virgin shall conceive*

Al Murredan – who shall come down; in Chaldee the son, or branch, who cometh

Coma – the desired or longed for (Haggai 2:7) the desire of all nations shall come



Al Zimach – the branch (Zech 3:8)

...and bear a son

The Constellation Leo – *the Lion of Judah*



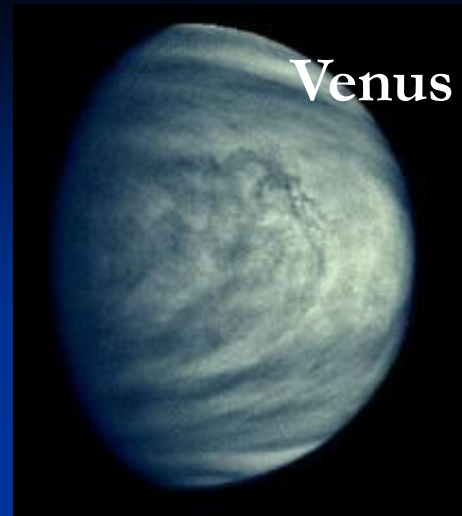
Regulus – *treading under foot*

Jupiter



The Planet
for Kings

Venus



The Mother
Planet

- Jupiter and Regulus had a conjunction in Leo in Sept. 3 BC
- In early 2 BC, another conjunction of Jupiter and Leo
- June of 2 BC, Jupiter's retrograde motion made it appear to dance around Regulus for the third time, and then join Venus



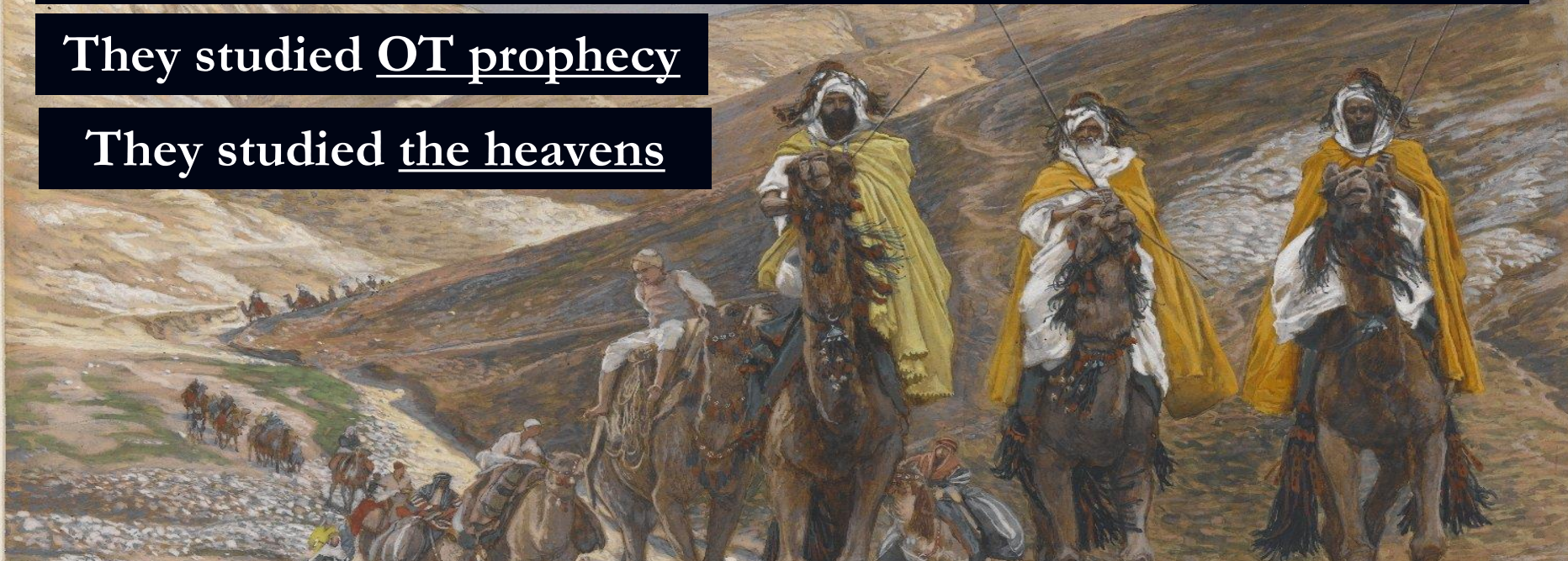
To a trained court astronomer skilled in Jewish prophecy, it meant *a Jewish king was to be born of a virgin; the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy*



Magi were not Astrologers or Kings; but believing astronomers

They studied OT prophecy

They studied the heavens



Travelled in a group of 24 or more, a large entourage of servants,
with armed guards on horseback

The caravan was likely an international delegation from the rival Parthian Empire including Babylonia, Media, Persia, Ethiopia, and even India!

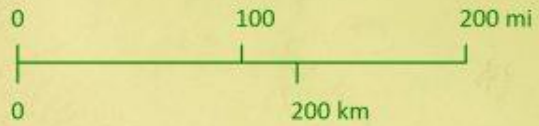
The Magi may have come from Babylon to find the king of the Jews.

Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod's soldiers.

EGYPT

Jerusalem

Babylon



Due to retrograde motion, the star may have appeared to stay still for up to six days over Bethlehem at the time of Christ's birth



In Rome, the star may have been interpreted to honor the 750th year of Rome's founding and Caesar Augustus' 25th year as the "prince of peace"

When Herod heard that it meant a "new king" he initiated the slaughter of boys under 2 in Bethlehem (up to 20 died)



After Joseph, Mary and Jesus had moved into a home in Bethlehem, the Magi would have met Jesus when he was 18 to 24 months old but soon after, the family would be warned by God to flee to Egypt...



The Wise Men offered...
GOLD – Divine King
FRANKINCENSE – Priest
MYRRH – Born to be a Sacrifice



Whether God miraculously formed the Star or providentially used the timing of astronomy...



The birth of Christ teaches us that He sovereignly times all events in the interest of His Kingdom!



If God can time the planets and stars, He certainly orders our lives!

Lessons from the Wise Men

- God intervenes in history for the purpose of advancing His Kingdom generationally
- Christ's birth was revealed to the lowly as well as those with great influence – influencers of nations
- Faithfulness to the Word and the promise of His Kingdom give us confidence of certain victory!
- The Kingdom purpose of the Church is to steward Christ's inheritance in discipling nations! (Ps. 2)