



Star of Bethlehem

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In Saint Matthew's text (2.1-11) the narrative is focused on the protagonists, the gift carrying magi and their interaction with King Herod.

Matthew's gospel (RSV) states,

'Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."'

After their encounter with Herod they secretly depart to travel to Bethlehem. As they leave Jerusalem,

'... lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.... And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.'

The gospel of St. Matthew is commonly accepted to have been written between 75 C.E. and 90 C.E. with the caveat that such dating is speculative as it is based on associations with external events.

Adoration of the Magi

Detail from the medieval polychrome choir screen in Paris' Notre Dame Cathedral.



Saint Luke (Luke 2:1-20) gives a different narrative (RSV)

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. ... And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

St Luke's pericope:
Angels, sheep,
shepherds,
a manger
and cattle.

There are debates on whether Luke's gospel drew on Matthew's or on a common first century source. However, both gospels record the witness of the heavens to Christ's birth.

Gerard David, circa 1510



Giotto's two different nativity scenes



Giotto, di Bondone (1266-1337) *Adoration of the Magi*, one of Giotto's Nativity Frescoes in The Arena Chapel at Padua, Italy. 1302-5.

Matthew's Gospel where Giotto depicts a baby with a comet and the three kings.

Luke's Gospel where Giotto depicts a new born infant – the shepherds, animals and no star.



Giotto, di Bondone (1266-1337) Scenes from the Life of Christ: 1. Nativity: Birth of Jesus Fresco: in The Arena Chapel. Padua, Italy. 1302-5.



The biblical accounts of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke

Matthew (2.1-11)

- a) Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king.
- b) Three wise men come , from the east (thus moving westerly?) to Judaea and ask Herod for the location of the new king. Herod suggests Bethlehem but asks them to come and tell him if they find the child.
- c) They reported that they had seen his star in the east (suggesting either the star is in the east or they saw it when they were in the east).
- d) They disappear fearing Herod then the star appeared in the east, guided them, and stood over the location of the Christ child. They did not return to Herod.
- e) Upon arriving at a house (not a stable) they find Mary with the child.
- f) They gave gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

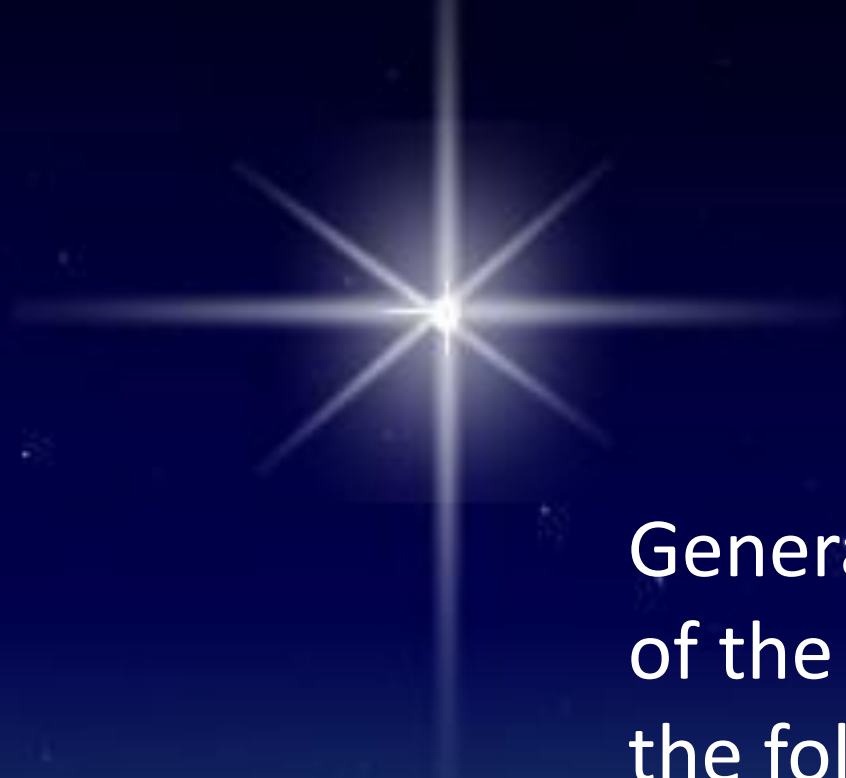
Luke (2.1-20)

- a) Joseph and Mary needed to travel to Bethlehem for a tax census . The inns were full so they find shelter elsewhere and Mary gave birth. She placed the new-born baby in a manger. (*The manger suggests to the reader that the birth occurred in a stable where animals are kept*).
- a) Meanwhile just outside Bethlehem shepherds were in the fields with their flocks.
- b) The shepherds saw a very bright light in the sky, which they considered was a divine force (angel). They were told by the angel that the long awaited Saviour of the Jewish people had been born – the Messiah.
- a) The shepherds decided to find the new-born child.
- a) Once they had seen the child they publicised abroad that they had seen the messiah. Everyone was amazed by their story.
- b) Mary and Joseph were concerned at the shepherds' enthusiasm.



The interpretation and other supporting primary material





The Star of Bethlehem Overview

Generally arguments concerning the source of the Star of Bethlehem can be divided into the following groups:

- The Star was a miracle.
- The Star was a political construct.
- The Star was a real celestial event.

A Political Construct

The theme of a political construct also contains the other two themes of miracle and celestial event.

In this period of the first few centuries of the common era there was considerable desire by largely anti-astrological early Christian writings to distance Christ's birth from any astrological association – that is Mesopotamian or Chaldean celestial sky omens.

The early Christian writers used Matthew's text to link Christ's birth to the messianic prophecy of Balaam.

Balaam's Prophecy

The messianic prophecy of Balaam
(Numbers 24.17):

‘A star shall come
forth out of Jacob
and a sceptre shall
rise out of
Israel...’(RSV).

Messiah

- ◆ Under the influence of the Holy Spirit Balaam makes a prophecy concerning the Promised Ruler which showed that the Promised One would in some way be a divine king:
“I see Him, but not here and now. I perceive Him, but far in the distant future. A Star will rise from Jacob; a Sceptre will emerge from Israel.” (Numbers 24:17, NLT)



Who was Balaam?

Ambrose of Milan (330–397) cited the Magi as the ancestors of Balaam while **Origen of Adamantius** (184/5–253/4) made the association explicitly:



‘...those who were then living in Mesopotamia, among whom Balaam had a great reputation and who are known to have been disciples in his art. It is said that the **race of Magi descends from him**, and that their **institution flourishes in eastern lands**, and that they [the Magi] had copied among them all of Balaam’s prophecies.’



St Luke's gospel is, peaceful and low-key in contrast to St Matthew's threat driven narrative filled with the tension of Herod's reaction to the new born child.

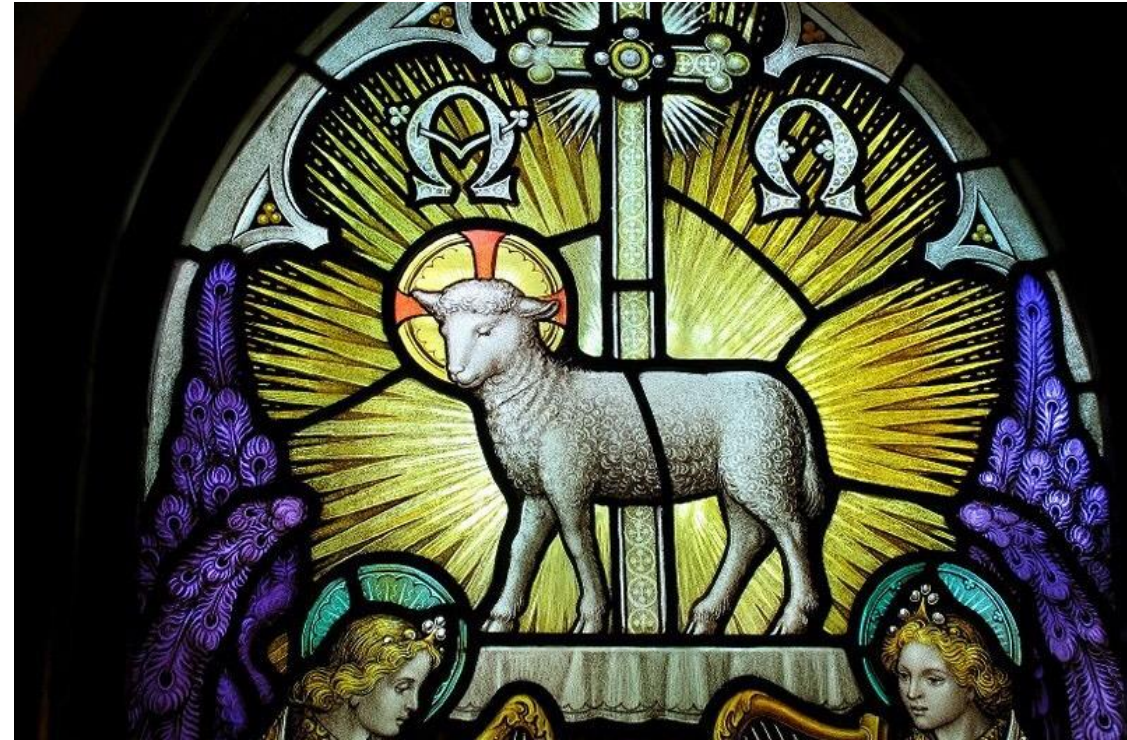


After consulting with his experts on where the Messiah was to be born, Herod directed the Magi to Bethlehem. He asked the Magi to return after they had found the “young child” and tell him so he could worship, too. This eventually lead to the slaughter of the innocents – all male children under the age of two were killed.

Some scholars argue that Luke's gentler gospel was written as a reaction against the political undertones of Matthew's pericope.

In considering Luke's nativity story, scholars view the shepherds in three ways:

- as symbolising Christ's humble origins
- as the notion of the Lamb of God;
- or as Christ's birth being announced by the symbolic role of 'everyman'/ the shepherds

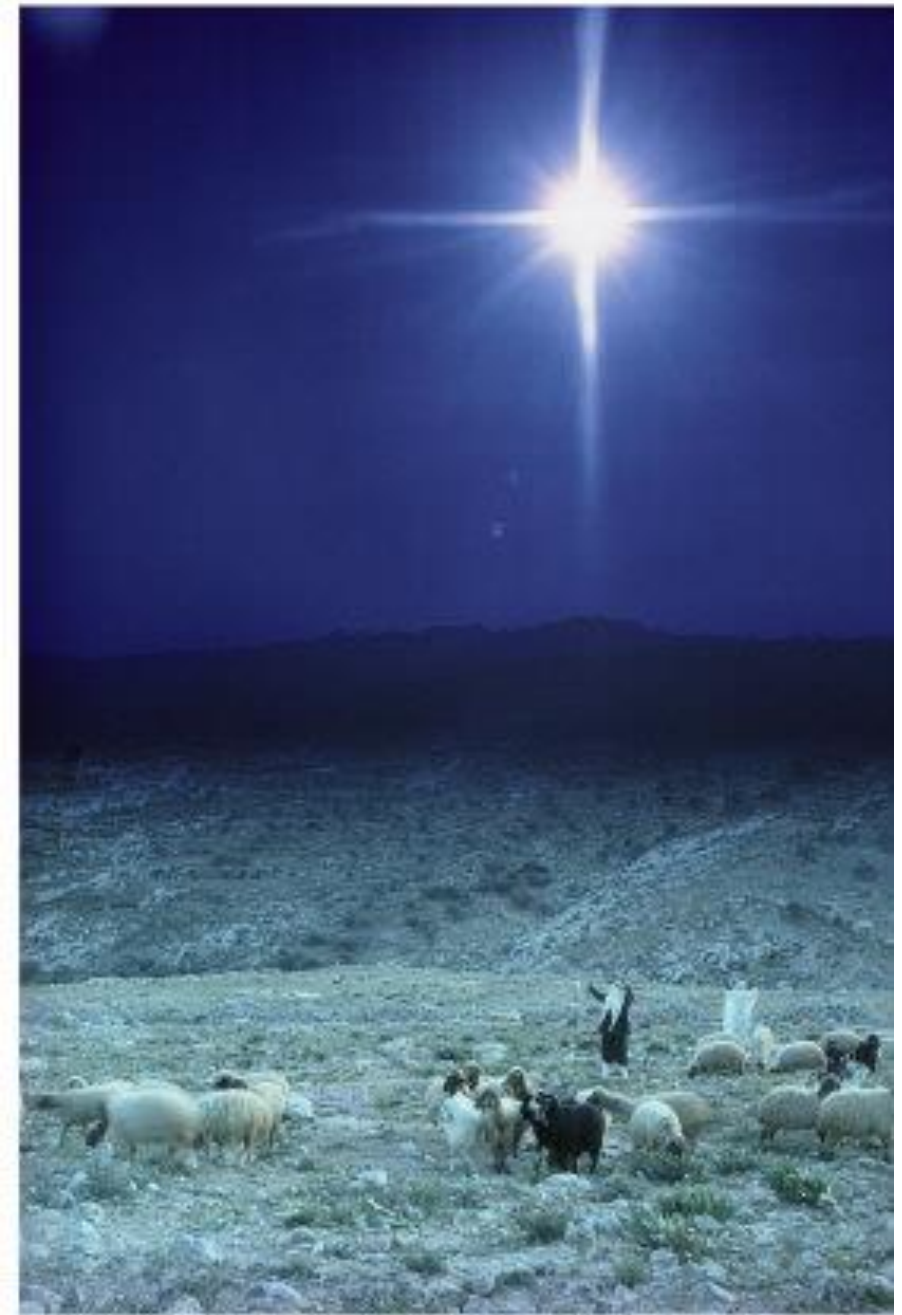


In contrasting the two pericopes it is considered that Luke's pericope was closer to Hellenistic history writing than that of Matthew and Mark.

Luke's nativity story is generally considered to emphasise Christ's humble origins. The bright light in the sky tends to be glossed over.

Matthew's nativity story is emphasised and appears to seek the tradition of the day - linking the birth to divine element - a heavenly sign.

However, both are stories of the night, not stories of a rising or culminating sun.

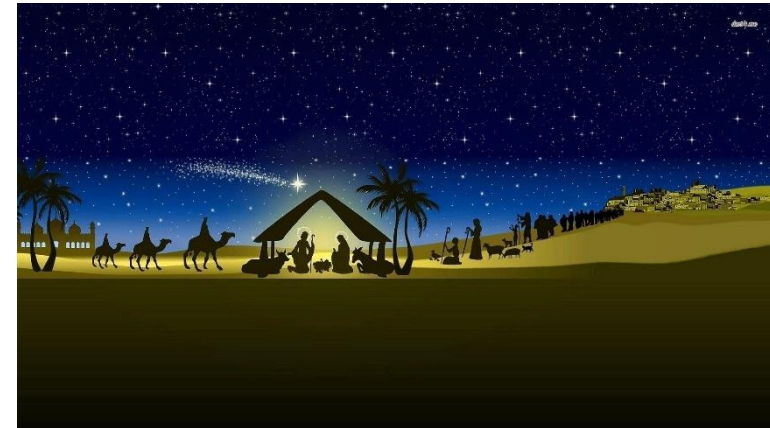


St Luke's pericope was largely ignored by the political machine bent on promoting Christianity in the first few centuries of the common era. We still use it today however to emphasize Christ's humble roots.





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The Marketing of St Matthew's Pericope



St Ignatius of Antioch (c.35 or 50 CE – 98 or 117 CE)

Ignatius wrote in his *Letter to the Ephesians* 19.2 that the Star of Bethlehem was as such that ‘all the other stars together with the sun and the moon become a chorus for the star, and it outshone them all with its light.’

For Ignatius the ‘star’ was a miracle that ‘set people free from the bonds which held them fast, including magic and astrological fate.’

Ignatius of Antioch. Hosios Loukas (south west chapel, south side),
Monastery, Boeotia Greece. Eleventh Century



Saint Ignatius establishes the Star of Bethlehem

A bright, multi-pointed star with eight distinct rays emanating from a central point, set against a dark blue, starry night sky. The star is the primary focus of the image.

St Ignatius viewed the star as a purely miraculous event. It was a sign from the heavens it showed how all the other heavenly signs were subordinate to it and that over-rode the power of astrological fate.

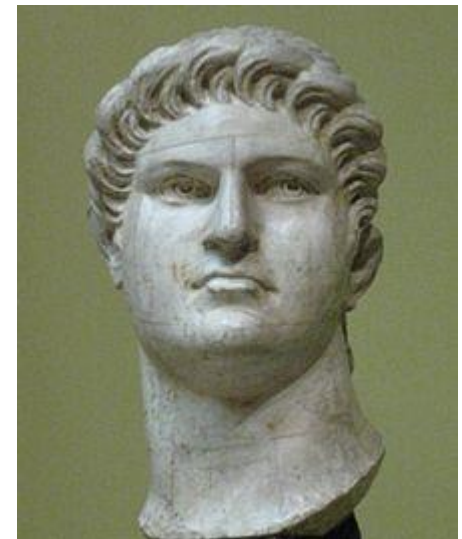
But why did St Ignatius need to construct such a story?

Astrology and Christ's birth.

It is believed that astrological speculation would have been linked with Christ's birth by Jewish Christians well before Matthew wrote his account of the 'star'. Supporting this is the time of the birth.

- **Christ was born at night.** For the 'star' of Balaam's prophecy to be fulfilled one needs the darkness of night to reveal the glory of any 'star'.
- Normally divine births were linked to sunrise or noon.
 - The Roman emperor Augustus (63 B.C.E.–14 C.E.) who was the emperor at the time of Christ's birth, was said to have been born at sun rise.
 - The Emperor Nero (c.37–63 C.E.) who wished to be seen as a solar deity, was also accorded a dawn birth.

A night birth thus points to it being proclaimed by astrologers, the story-tellers of the night sky.



The Astrology of the first few centuries of the common era

Astrology was a mixture of Mesopotamian sky lore of the seventh century B.C.E. where the planetary movements in relationship to each other as well as the constellations were reported in a poetic, anthropomorphic manner

For example, a letter written by a royal astrologer to his king, in the seventh century B.C.E, titled the 'Rising of Venus' states:

'What is this love by which Ishtar loves the king my lord and has [sent] the very best to the king my lord!'

(Hunger 1992:Paragraph 27).

This form of poetic visual astronomy was blended with the Hellenistic astrological thinking.

Who were the Magi?

From the Jewish historian **Josephus**, the Greek historian **Herodotus**, and the writings of **Strabo**:



The magi follow the star in this sixth-century mosaic at the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare near Ravenna, Italy.

The Magi first appear about the 7th century B.C. in the Median empire (*Herodotus* I, ci). At the time of the birth of Christ, the Magi were an ancient priestly caste dwelling within the Parthian empire (Mesopotamia), a large area to the east of the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. These priests practiced a form of astrology.

At the time, according to Strabo, just prior to the birth of Christ, the Magi formed the upper house of the Megistanes council, whose duties included the election of the king of the Parthian empire (*Strabo*, XI, ix,3). Thus, the Magi, at this time, were kingmakers.

They used a Mesopotamian style of astrology which would have been the astrology used by the Magi in at the time of Matthew's pericope.

Magi/Mesopotamian Tablets of Planetary movements

Since the Sumerian period 3500-2300 BC, planetary tables and their orbital period were recorded on clay tablets.

There is a large collection of such work from the Neo-Babylonian and Neo-Assyrian period 1000 BCE - 626 BCE

They produced tablets that listed the forthcoming planetary movements for future years. Tablets have been found dated from 08 B.C.E. which list the forthcoming Jupiter/Saturn conjunction.



A Babylonian lunar table



The Star of Bethlehem

Returning to the
fundamental questions

Was the Star a miracle?
Was the Star purely a political construct?
Was the Star a real celestial event?



Part 3 : The Different Opinions



Establishing the time frame

Historically it is accepted that Christ was born before the death of King Herod. Herod's death is generally acknowledged as being around 04 B.C.E. and thus any celestial event needs to occur some years before that date.

Thus the search needs to be narrowed to a range from 10 BCE – 5 BCE

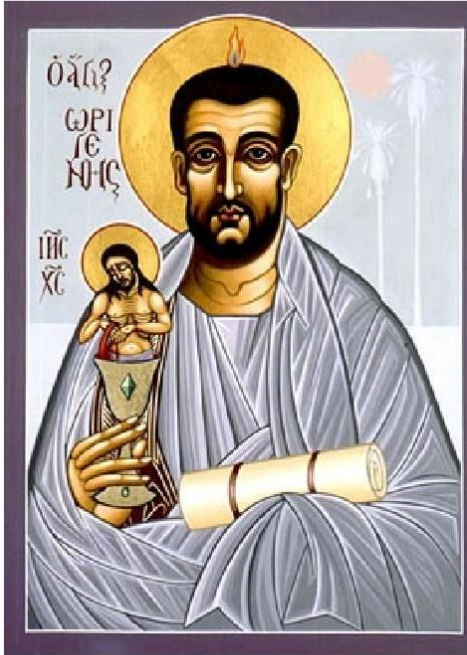
Bearing in mind Herod kills all male children younger than two years to try and eliminate the king of the Jews.



Herod the Great – Roman client king of Judea (c.73 BC- c.4 BC)

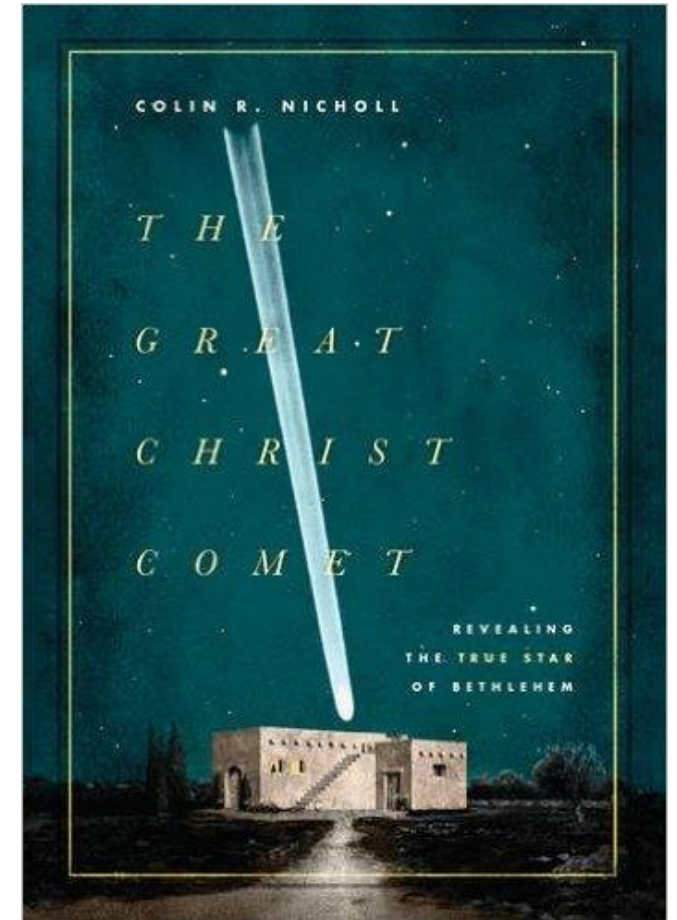
A Comet

Following Ignatius' lead **Origen** suggested in *Contra Celsum*, 1.58, that the 'star' was a comet.



Giotto, di Bondone (1266-1337) *Adoration of the Magi*, one of Giotto's Nativity Frescoes in The Arena Chapel at Padua, Italy. 1302-5.

The most likely candidate is the bright comet which appeared in the constellation of Capricorn in 5BC. This was recorded by astronomers in China.



Colin Nicholl **The Great Christ Comet: Revealing the True Star of Bethlehem** Hardcover – September 30, 2015

Giotto's two different nativity scenes



Giotto, di Bondone (1266-1337) *Adoration of the Magi*, one of Giotto's Nativity Frescoes in The Arena Chapel at Padua, Italy. 1302-5.

Matthew's Gospel where Giotto depicts a baby with a comet and the three kings.

Luke's Gospel where Giotto depicts a new born infant – the shepherds, animals and no star.



Giotto, di Bondone (1266-1337) *Scenes from the Life of Christ: 1. Nativity: Birth of Jesus* fresco: in The Arena Chapel. Padua, Italy. 1302-5.

A Super Nova

Other scholars promote the idea that the 'star' was a supernova



The Three Planet Cluster

Kepler puts a possible date to Christ's birth



Some thirteen hundred years later **Johannes Kepler** (1571-1630) re-opened the debate when he speculated that the Star of Bethlehem was linked to a **rare conjunction of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn**.

He calculated that such a conjunction of the three superior planets (Mars, Jupiter and Saturn), which he witnessed in 1603, also occurred in 07/06 B.C.E. and was rare enough — 796.4 years between occurrences — to warrant the story of the ‘star’

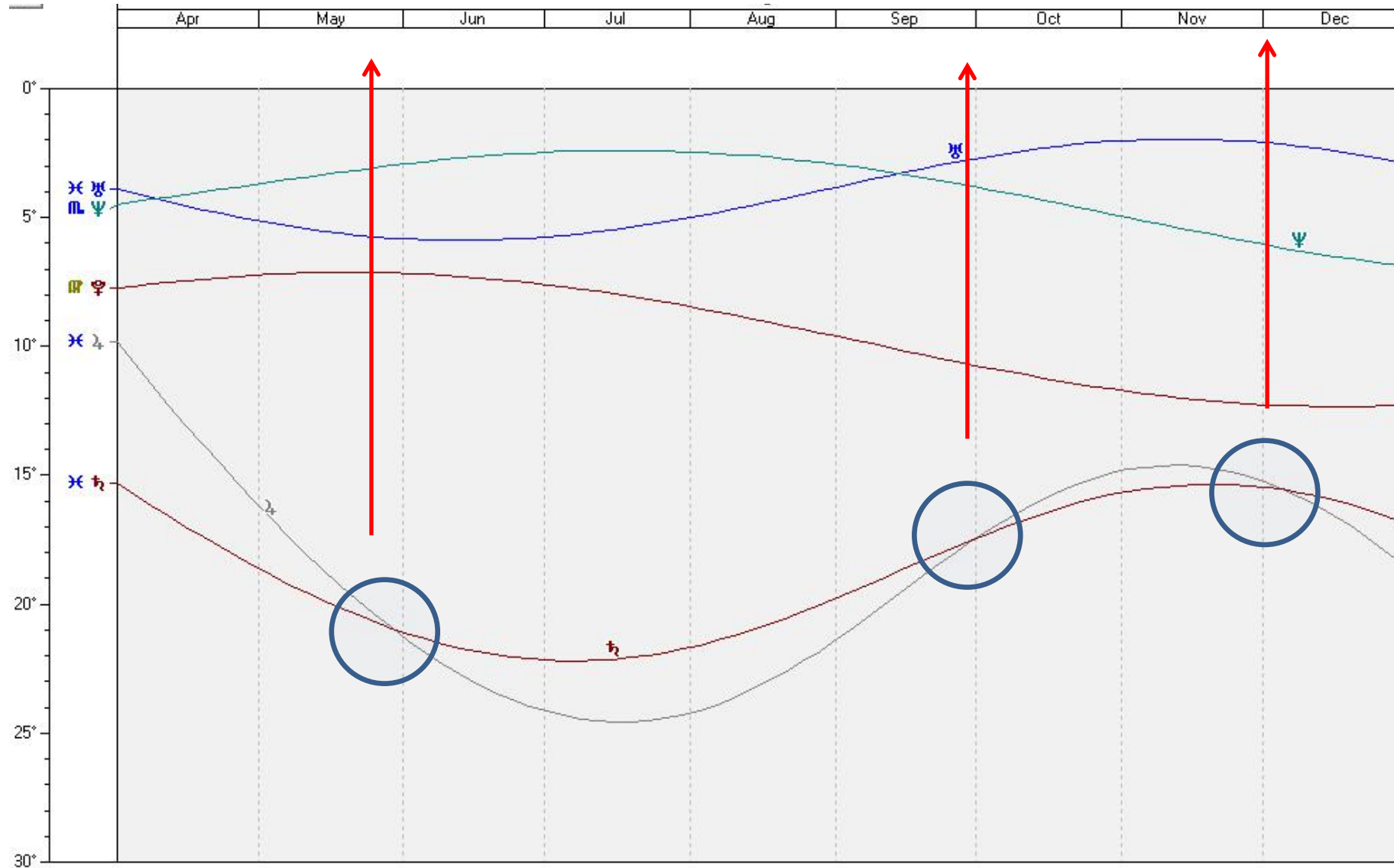
The Jupiter Saturn Conjunction in the stars of Pisces

Another strong candidate for the 'star' was the triple conjunction — occurring three times — of Jupiter/Saturn which happened in 07-06 B.C.E.

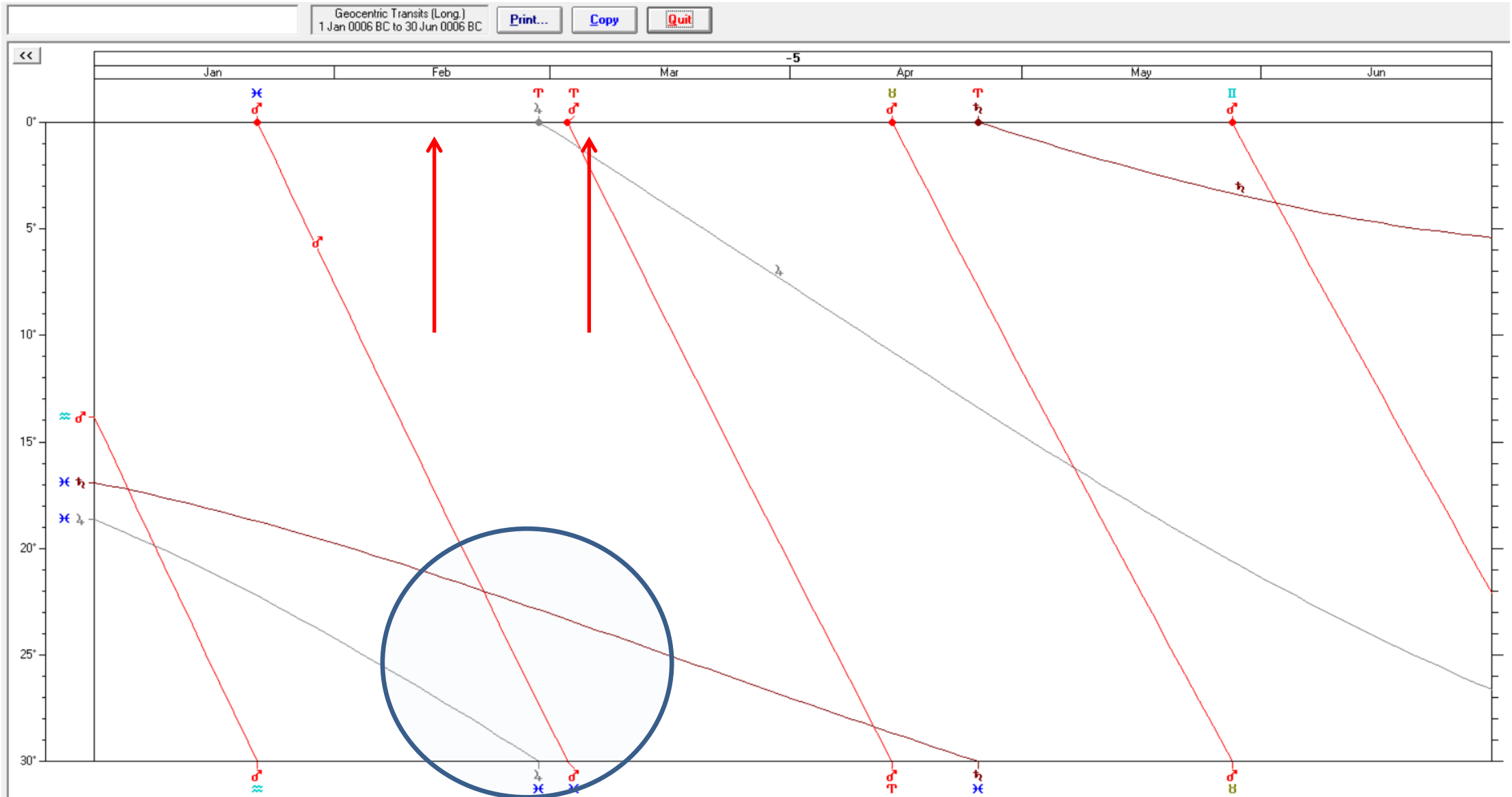
This triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn occurred immediately *before* the three planet conjunction noted by Kepler.

The Jupiter Saturn Conjunction of 0007BC

Would have been watched for and considered an important sky event within Mesopotamian as well as Hellenistic traditions



The Jupiter Saturn Mars cluster of February 06 BC



If the star is an celestial event then there is an assumption that it has to be a spectacular sky event, visually stunning!

The contenders are:

- The Jupiter Saturn conjunction (this happens every 20 years) and this one was in Pisces.
- Kepler's idea that the clustering of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn which only occurs every 796.4 years.
- A comet – maybe the one noted by the Chinese of 5 BC
- A super nova
- Or some other notable event, such as Jupiter in the stars of Aries with an eclipse.

Michael Molnar's Theory

Jupiter in Aries, and
eclipsed by the
moon.

THE  STAR
OF BETHLEHEM



f the Magi

The Antioch Coin

Michael Molnar (1999) uses the evidence of an Antioch coin. He suggests the year 06 B.C.E. for the appearance of the 'star' due to the fact that the coin appeared to celebrate the passage of Jupiter through the stars of Aries while being twice eclipsed by the moon.

Citing Claudius Ptolemy (c. 85–165) and the Roman lawyer/astrologer Firmicus Maternus (c.330), Molnar argues that this event would have been of sufficient importance for astrologers to announce a sovereign birth and Jupiter as the Star of Bethlehem.



The Antioch Coins minted from 6 CE to 253 CE



Figure 1: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 2: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 3: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 4: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 5: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 6: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 7: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 8: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 9: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 10: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 11: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 12: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 13: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 14: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 15: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 16: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 17: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 18: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 20: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 21: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 23: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)



Figure 24: Date: 100-110 (T. Cartwright collection)

Zeus, Jupiter, was a important deity in Antioch. His cult was Encouraged to support acceptance of Roman kingship.



Temple Mount  Bethlehem

Molnar 's theory



Michael Molnar's theory
Moon eclipsing Jupiter
While being in Aries

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Date and time					Julian Day						
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The eclipse of Jupiter by the moon. Was not visible in Israel. It occurred about 2 hours after noon.

Date and time										X	
Date and time					Julian Day						
-5	/	3	/	20	13	:	48	:	7		

Additionally Molnar claimed that astrological, Jupiter in Aries implied the birth of a king. But this astrological reading was by, Firmicus Maternus in the fourth century CE. Also he was a Roman astrologer practicing largely Hellenistic astrology.

Furthermore the eclipse of a planet, such as Jupiter was, in the Mesopotamian visual astrology, associated with the death of a king, not the birth.

Issar-sumu-eres to his King – seventh century BC

2 [1] AN.MI EN.NUN—UD.ZAL.LI GAR-Wa
EN.NUN (WKRIM.SI.SADU 'GIG' AN\TI
KUR—URI.KI GAL

An eclipse in the morning watch [.....]
touches and is seen together: there will
be deaths; the ruler will die.

Molnar's theory can be seriously challenged:

1 – It is not a spectacular sky event – Jupiter in Aries every 12 years.

2 – It implied the death of a king not the birth of a king.

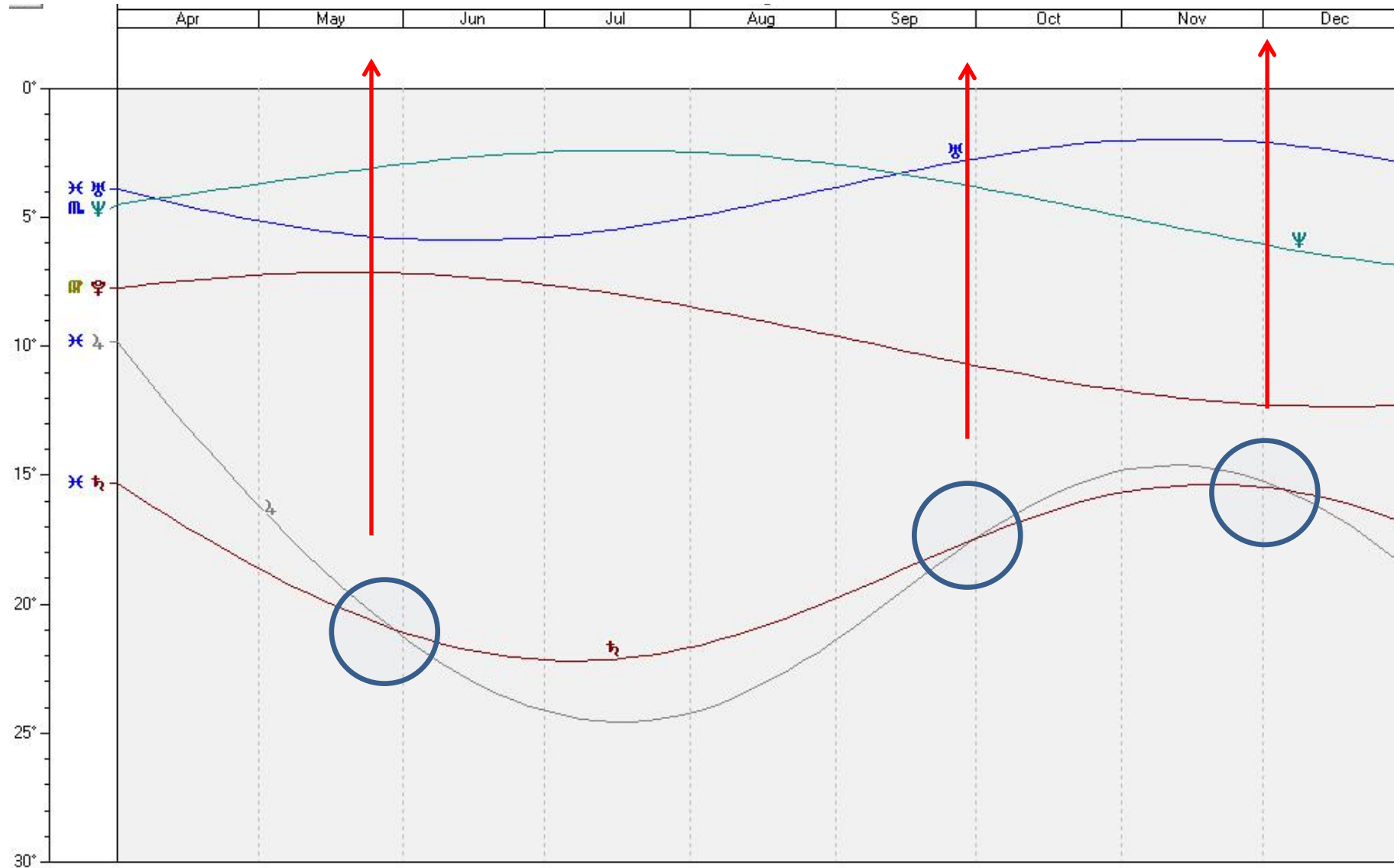
3 – This Antioch logo was printed on coins as early as 6 CE.

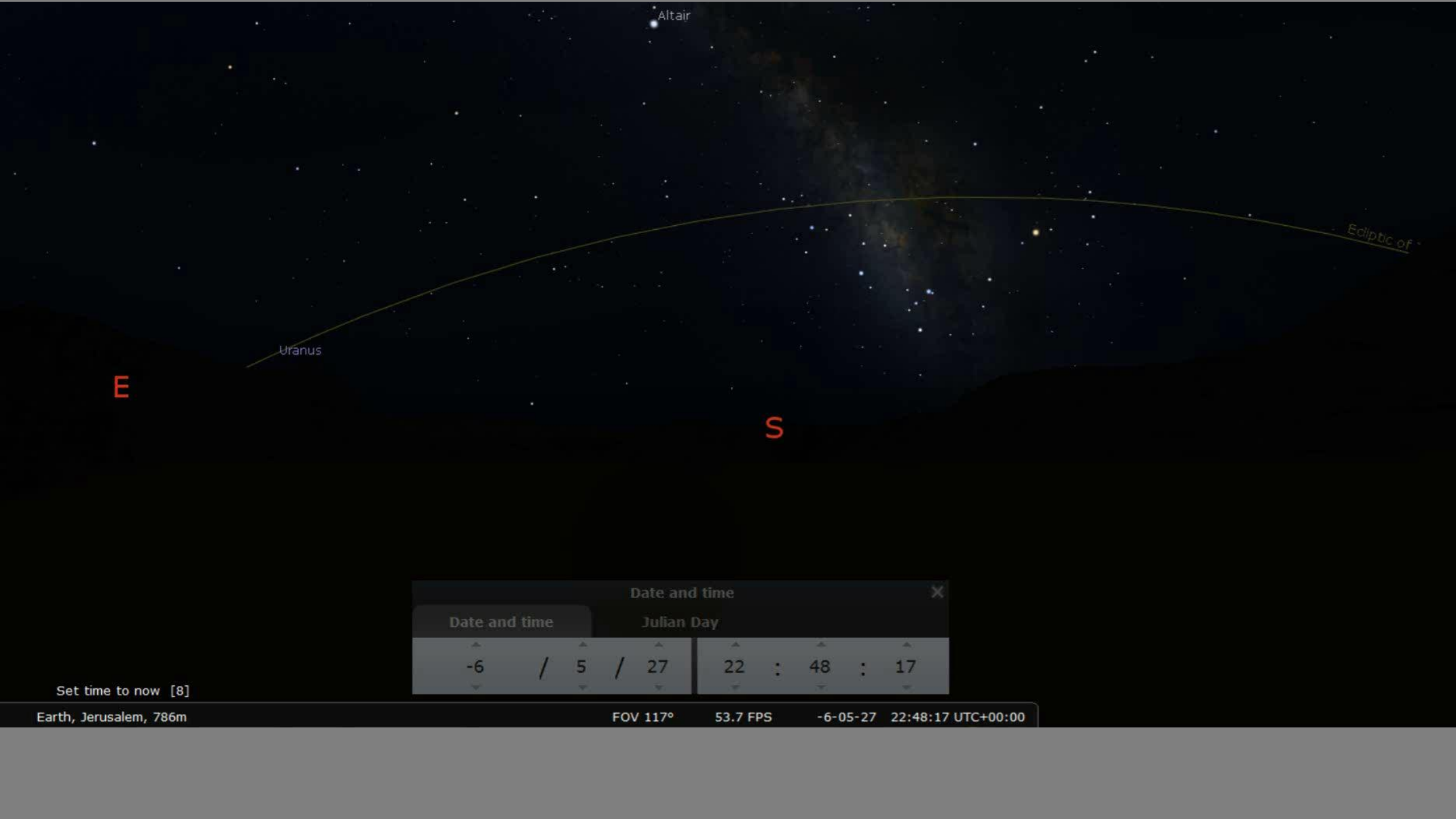
4 – It was a Roman and then later a Christian strong hold.



The Jupiter Saturn Conjunction of 0007BC

Would have been watched for and considered an important sky event within Mesopotamian as well as Hellenistic traditions





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FOV 117°

53.7 FPS

-6-05-27 22:48:17 UTC+00:00

The Limited view of these arguments

Throughout these diverse arguments the idea of a single bright heavenly object has blinded researchers and prevented them looking for celestial information amongst the other attributes of the two gospel stories.

- There is an unquestioned assumption that the Magi **are real individuals** carrying **real gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh**.
- Any discussion about the nature of the **shepherds in Luke's pericope** is focused on the **first century B.C.E. herding habits of shepherds around Jerusalem**.
- Similarly the **announcing angel** who appears as a bright apparition to the shepherds is **largely ignored** and the cattle, manger, and stable settings are **assumed to be historical** or used to imply Christ's humble origins.



Part 4 : Adding the Astrological Lore



The Star as a Spectacular Heavenly Event

Spectacular could be meant in an astrological sense.

For as Denzey (2003:220) points out, 'modern scientific interpreters of the Star of Bethlehem consistently miss this point,' that the significance of any celestial event, if it did occur, needs to be judged through the lens of the astrological discourse of the Magi rather than the modern notions of spectacular.

Hegedus (2003:83,87), agrees and also considers that the astrological tradition which viewed the star as significant belonged to the astrology of the Magi and also, as noted earlier, the prophet Balaam.

Denzey, N. 2003. 'A New Star on the Horizon - Astral Christologies and Stellar Debates in Early Christian Discourse'. *In*: Noegel, S. B., Walker, J. T. & Wheeler, B. M. (eds.)

Hegedus, T. 2003. The Magi and the Star in the Gospel of Matthew and Early Christian Tradition. *Laval Théologique et Philosophique*, 59, 81-95



King Herod died in 04 BC

- The most important sky events of the 10 years before his death were:
- The triple conjunction of Jupiter-Saturn in 07BC
- Followed by the three planet combination of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars 6 months later in 06 BC.

The astrological lore of the period

Three magi or kings bearing
gifts, a baby and mother
and a star.



Manger, new born infant,
sheep, shepherds, angels,
cattle or other animals.



Matthew's Gospel

The Three Kings that come from the east.

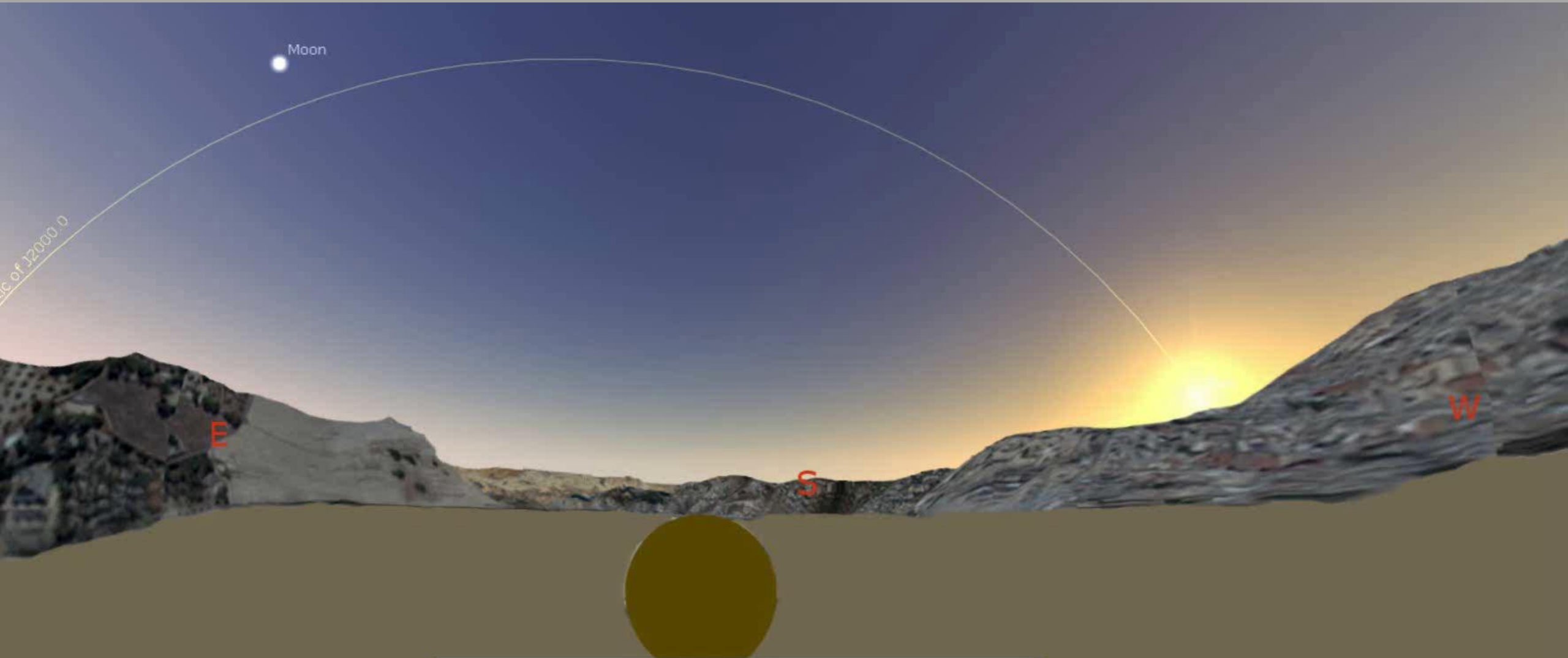
- The **three kings come from the east** to Jerusalem
- They come to honour a new-born king.
- They carry **gold, frankincense, and myrrh** , all of which in astrology at that time are ruled or belong to the sun.
- They have seen the king's sign in the heavens – maybe the triple Jupiter - Saturn conjunction of 0007BC.
- While they are in Jerusalem a new star appears in the east. They follow it to Bethlehem.
- The star stands still over the location of the new-born king.

Hellenistic astrological thinking of the period.

- The planets which are within two zodiac signs of the sun or moon are known as **Spear Bearers** and form what was called by Claudius Ptolemy (c. 87-150) a **Doryphory**. They give **gifts to the luminary**.
- Ptolemy in his *Tetrabiblos* uses this technique to define power in a chart:

In Book III chapter V, Ptolemy talks of judging the wealth or power of a horoscope by using the spear-bearers, or doryphory – **the wealth is defined by the gifts given**.

Ptolemy wrote of the *doryphory* that if it was made up of the **three superior planets of Mars, Jupiter and Saturn**, then the level of gifts that could be bestowed on the luminary was sufficient to mark the birth of a great king (Ptolemy 1969:Bk IV Ch III).



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Moon

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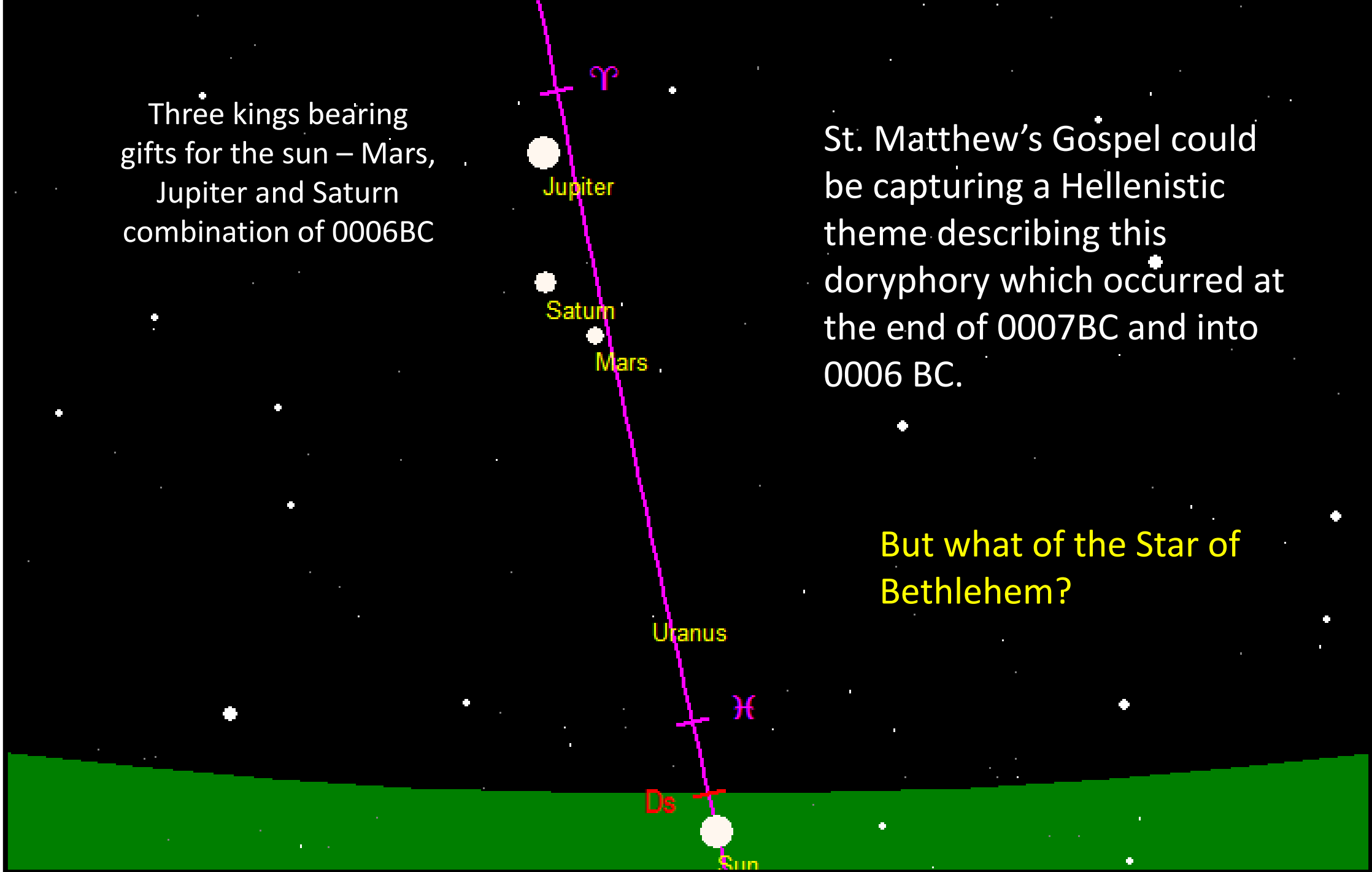
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Three kings bearing
gifts for the sun – Mars,
Jupiter and Saturn
combination of 0006BC

St. Matthew's Gospel could
be capturing a Hellenistic
theme describing this
doryphory which occurred at
the end of 0007BC and into
0006 BC.

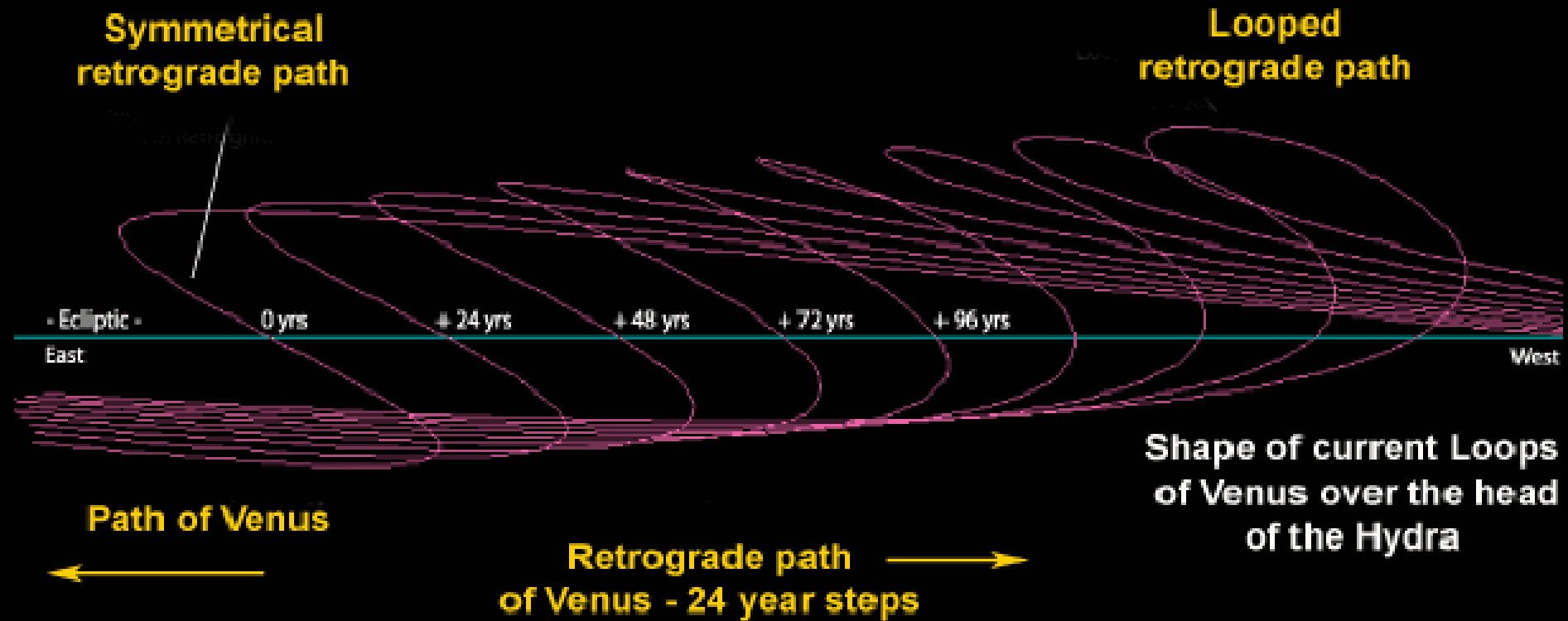
But what of the Star of
Bethlehem?



The 'three kings' having disappeared now re appear but this time rising before the sun, in the House of the Sun.

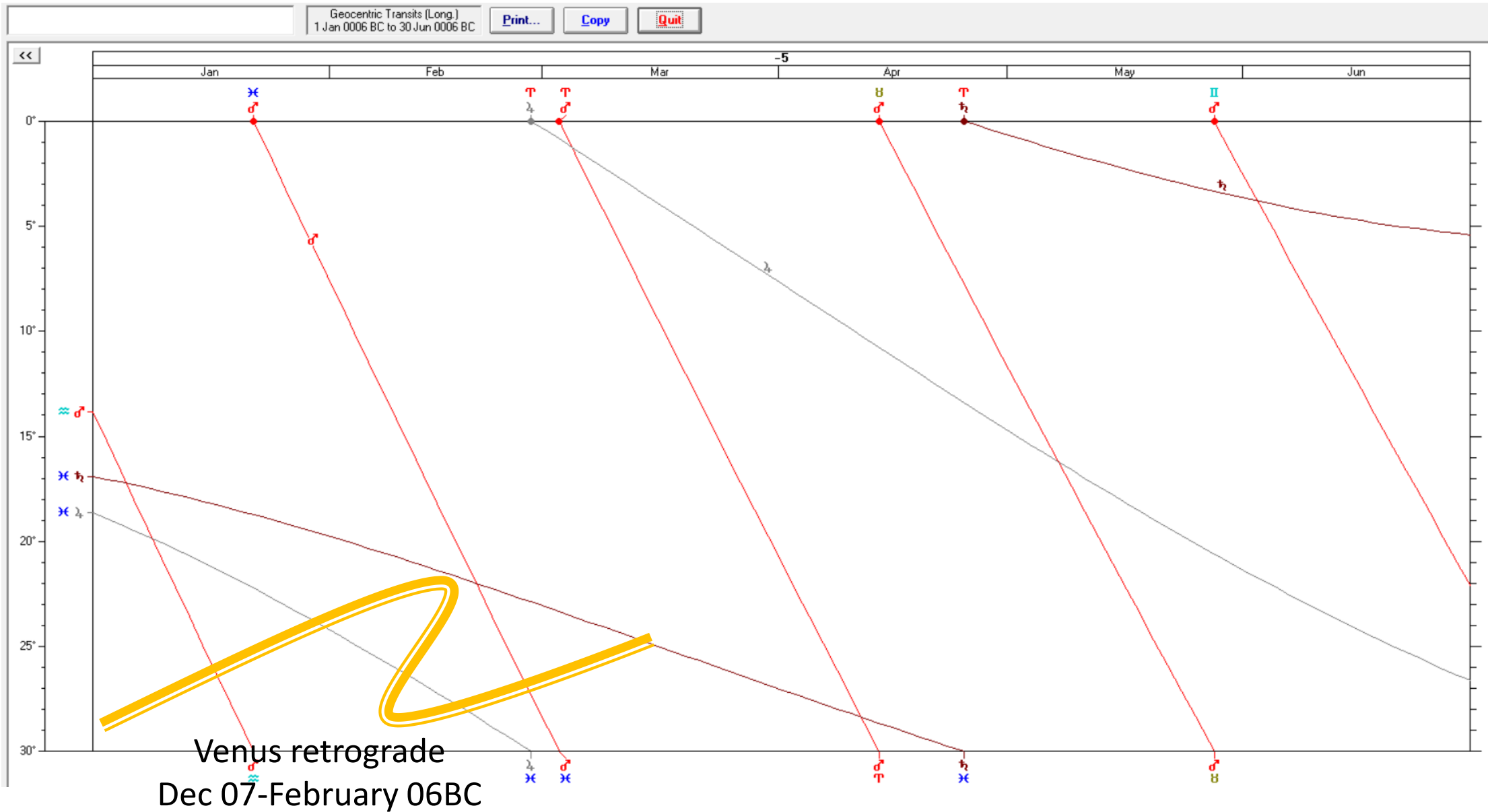


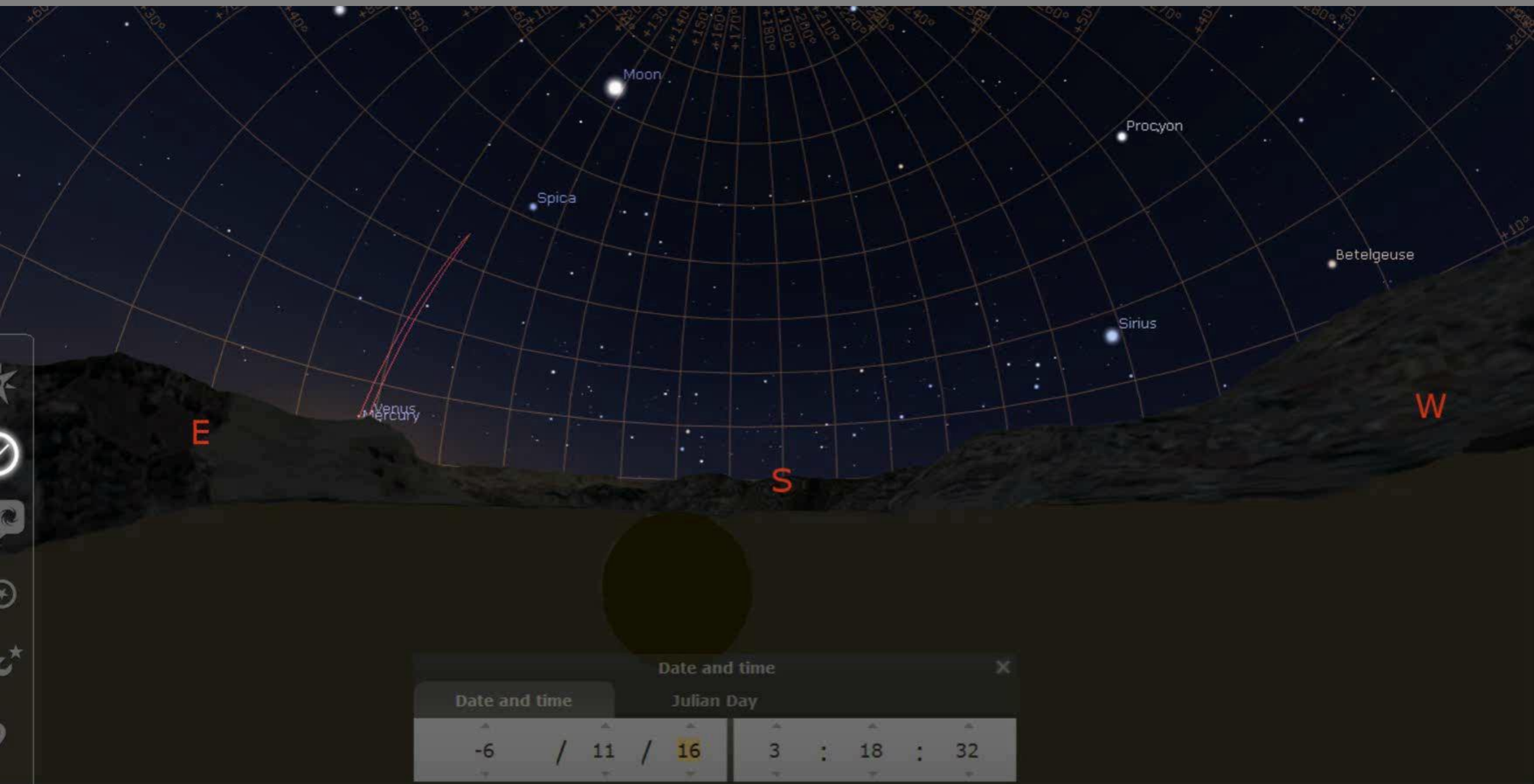
Example of the variation of the Venus Retrograde loops in the Sky



Venus only repeats an exact retrograde loop in the same place of the sky every 243 years .

The Jupiter Saturn Mars cluster of February 06 BC





Date and time

X

Date and time

Julian Day

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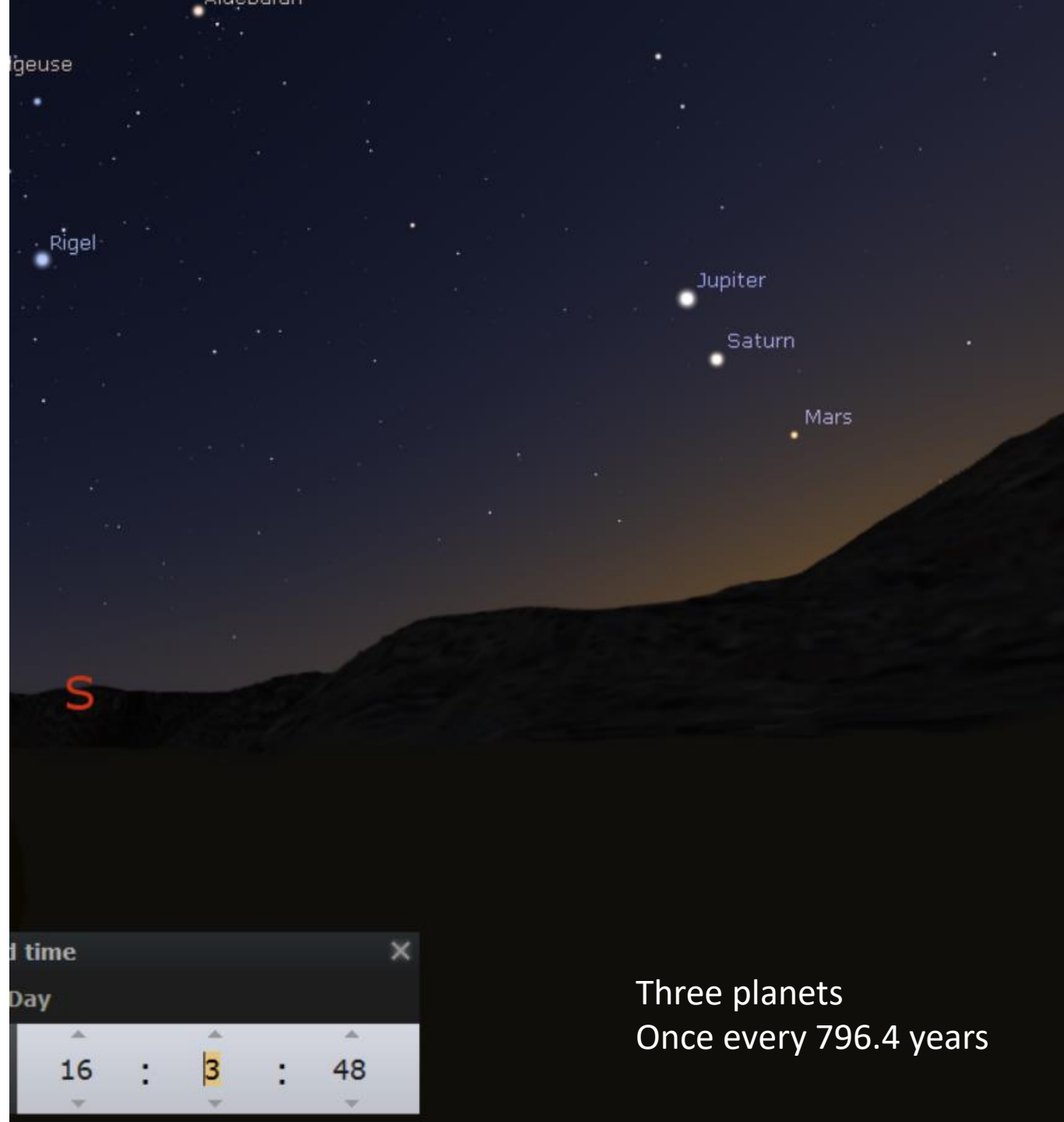
18

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32



This Venus retrograde behaviour
Once ever 243 years.



Three planets
Once every 796.4 years

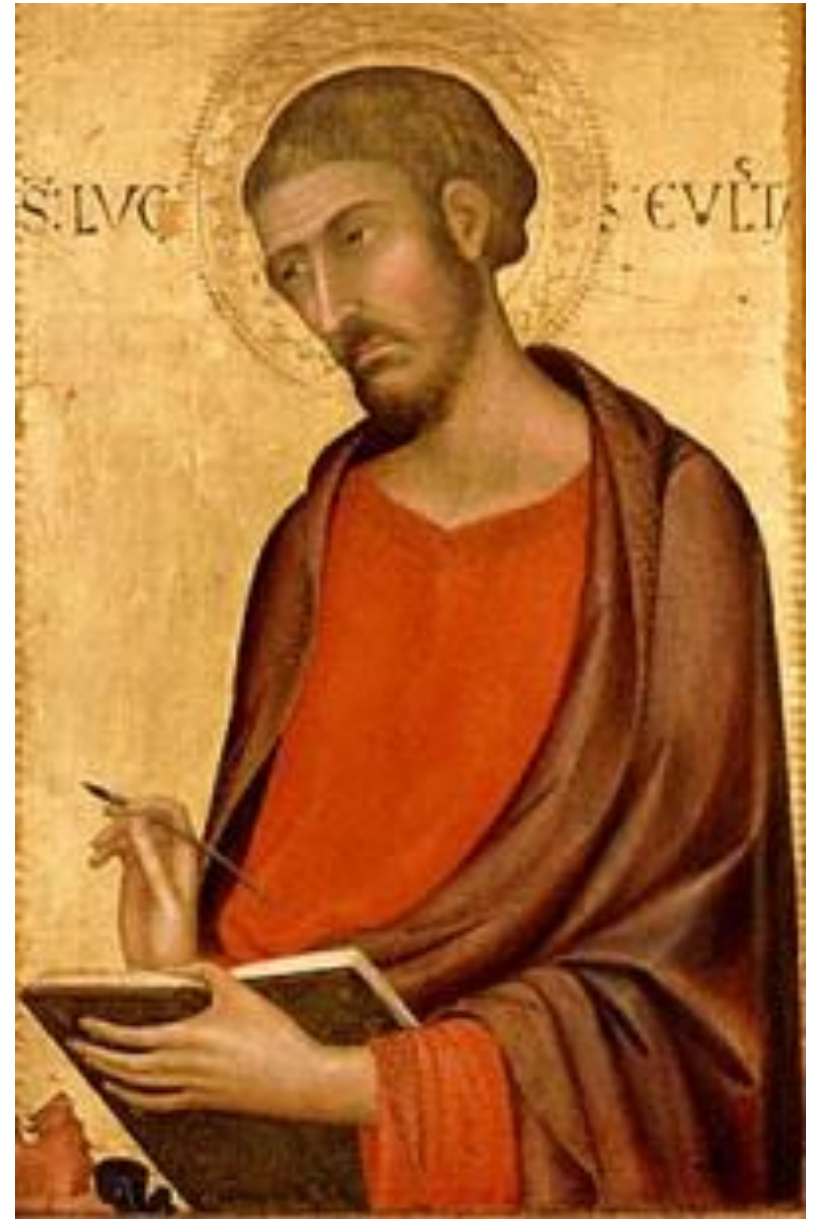


In this regard the Star of Bethlehem is not a spectacular sky event like a comet or super nova but is instead a spectacular astrological event.

A combination of the three visible planets honouring the 'king' while Venus is super bright and doing a most unusual retrograde loop that causes it to 'hover' and drop down in the sky.

The Star Bethlehem thus is a sky narrative, the title to a story.

But what of
Saint Luke's
gentle account
of shepherds
and animals?





The biblical accounts of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke

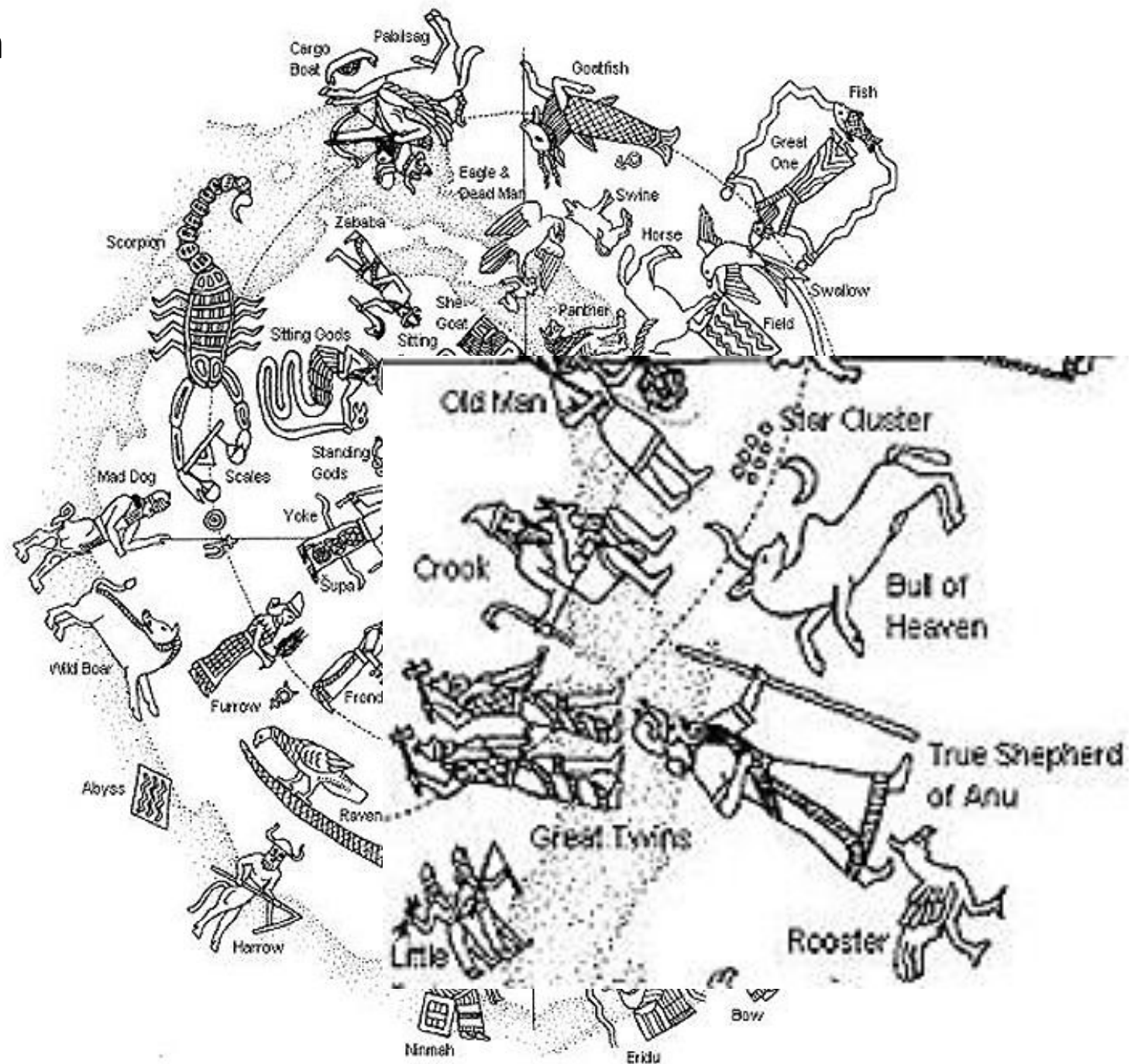
Matthew (2.1-11)

- a) Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king.
- b) Three wise men come , from the east (thus moving westerly) to Judaea and ask Herod for the location of the new king. Herod suggests Bethlehem but asks them to come and tell him if they find the child.
- c) They reported that they had seen his star in the east (suggesting either the star is in the east or they saw it when they were in the east).
- d) When they left Herod, a star appeared in the east, guided them, and stood over the location of the Christ child. They did not return to Herod.
- e) Upon arriving at a house (not a stable) they find Mary with the child.
- f) They gave gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

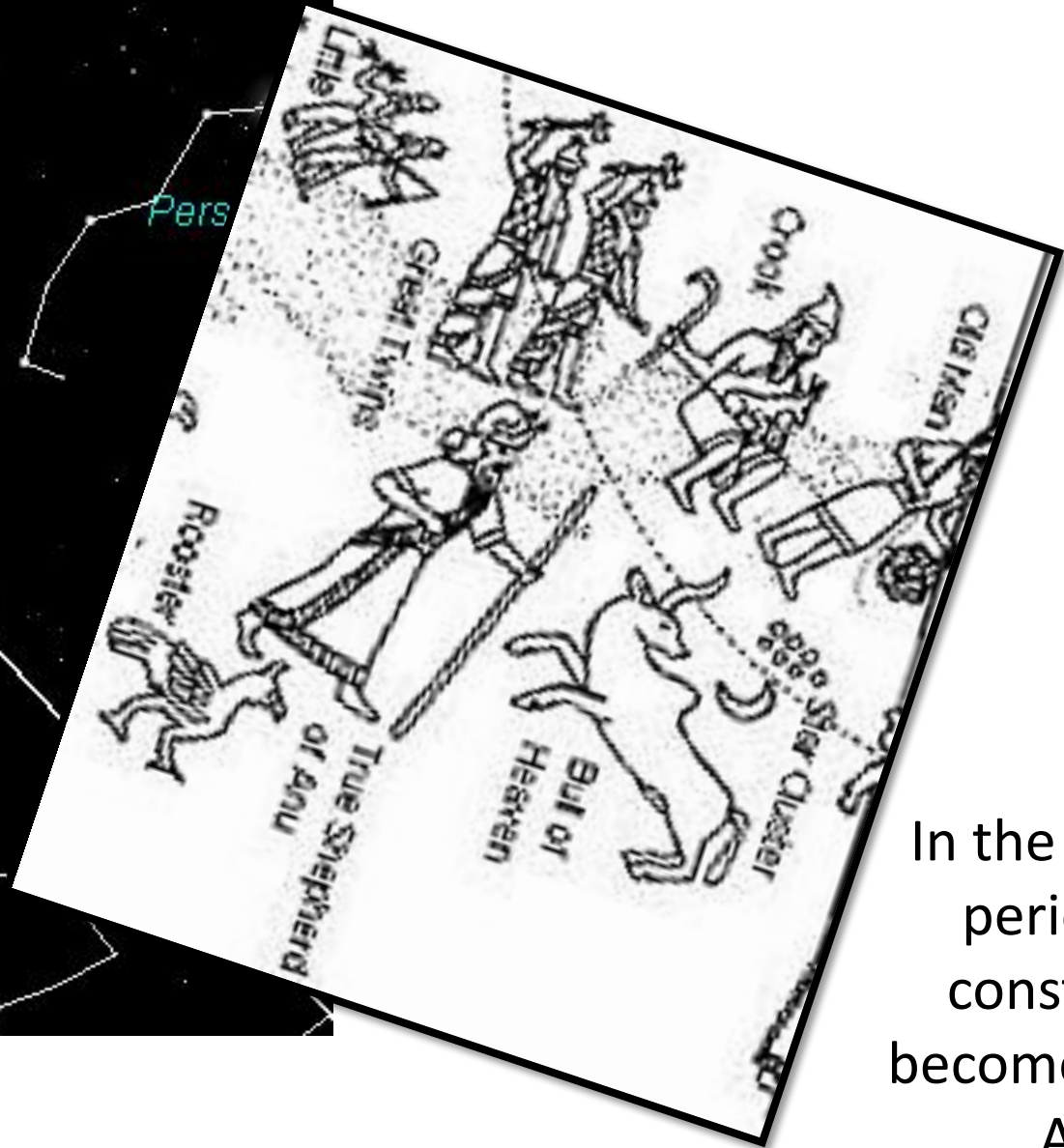
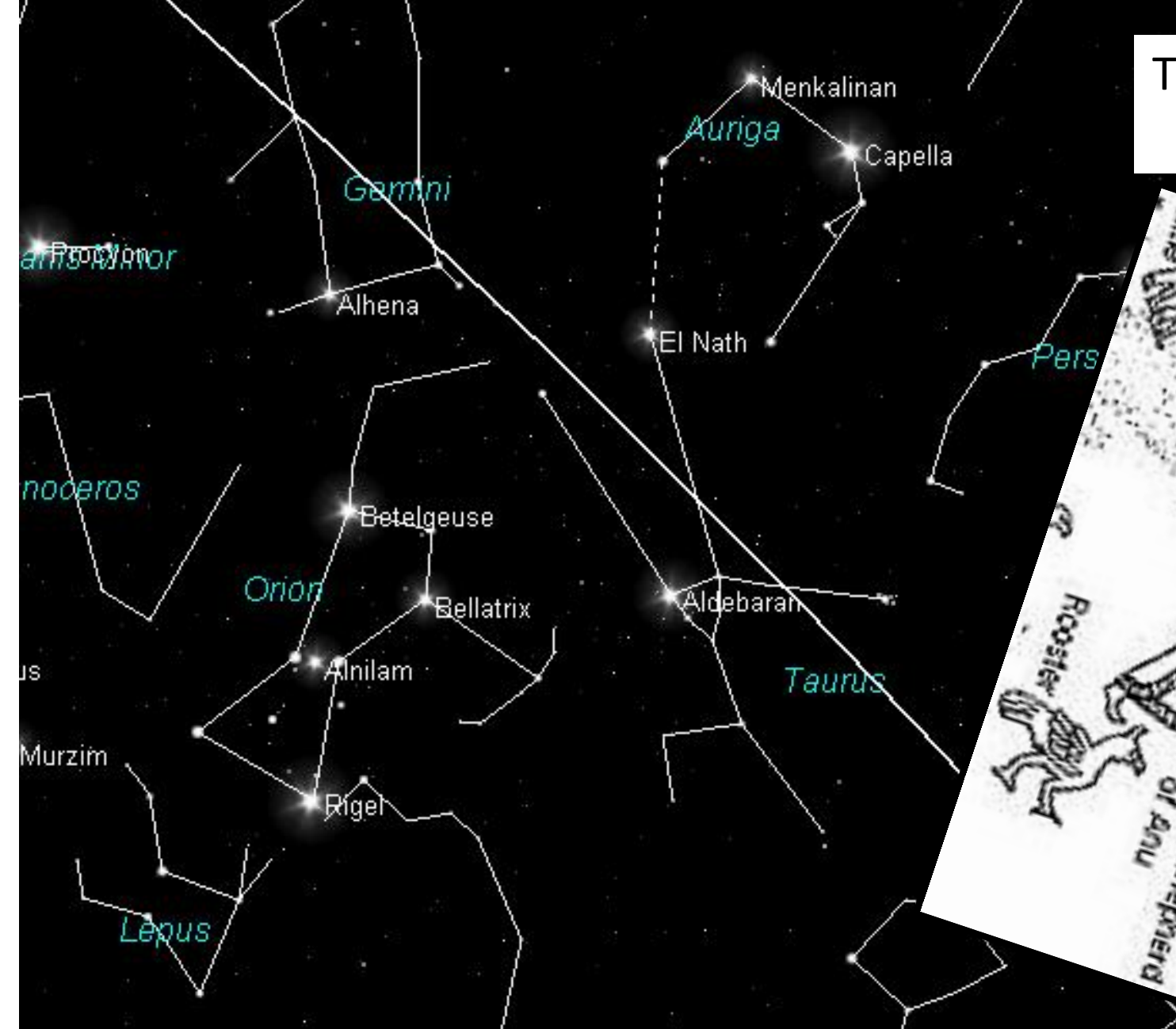
Luke (2.1-20)

- a) Joseph and Mary needed to travel to Bethlehem for a tax census . The inns were full so they found shelter elsewhere and Mary gave birth. She placed the new-born baby in a manger. (*The manger suggests to the reader that the birth occurred in a stable where animals are kept*).
- a) Meanwhile just outside Bethlehem shepherds were in the fields with their flocks.
- b) The shepherds saw a very bright light in the sky, which they considered was a divine force (angel). They were told by the angel that the long awaited Saviour of the Jewish people had been born – the Messiah.
- a) The shepherds decided to find the new-born child.
- a) Once they had seen the child they publicised abroad that they had seen the messiah. Everyone was amazed by their story.
- b) Mary and Joseph were concerned at the shepherds' enthusiasm.

The Mesopotamian Constellations



The Shepherd of Anu and the Crook



In the Hellenistic period these constellations become Orion and Auriga

If the stars of Orion [The Shepherd of Anu] keep gaining radiance: an important person will become too mighty and commit evil. — Venus stands in front of Orion.

Herman Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*: p.143.



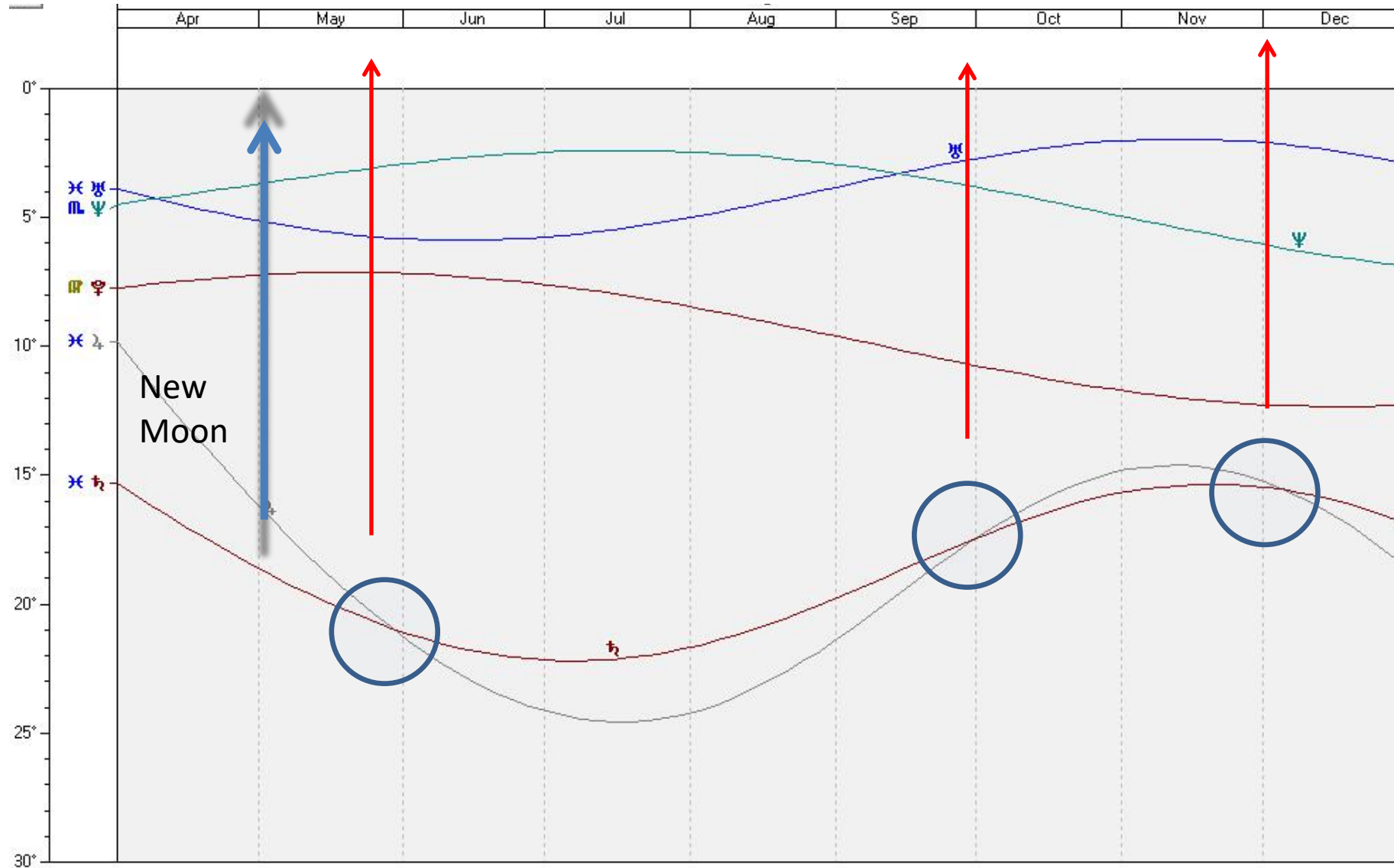
The priest Bullutu in the mid-7 century BC, records a bright Venus in the ‘Crook’, the stars of Auriga, and writes of this combination, *‘the foundation of the throne will become stable.’*

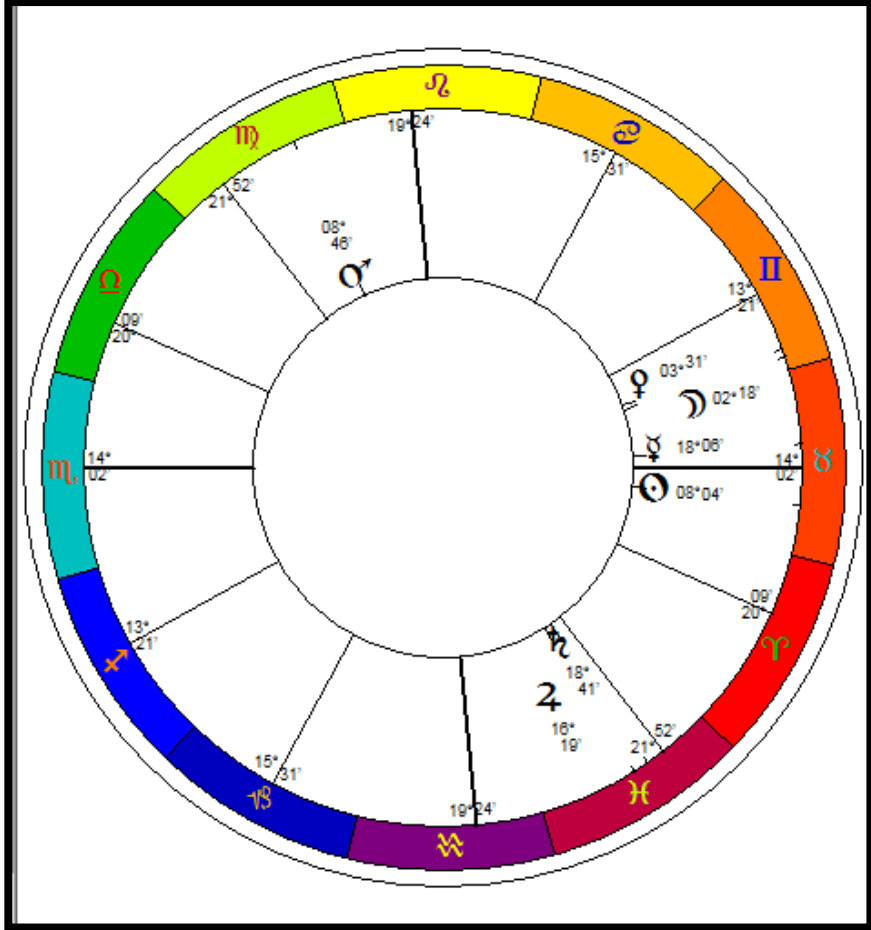
Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*: p.73.



The Jupiter Saturn Conjunction of 0007BC

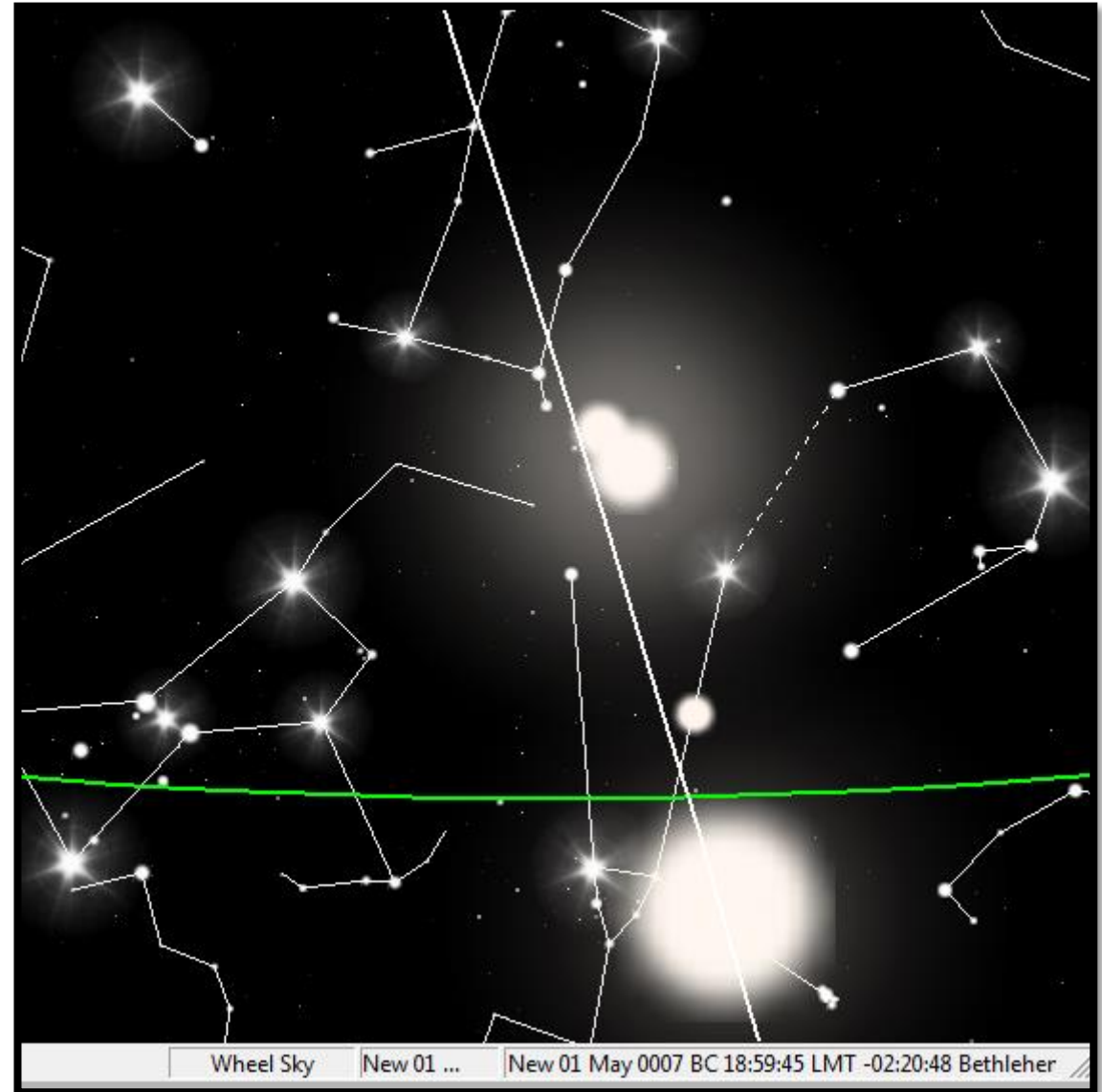
Would have been watched for and considered an important sky event within Mesopotamian as well as Hellenistic traditions





Venus as an evening star was with the crescent moon, almost touching, in the stars of the Shepherd of Anu, while the Sun, the king, was in the Cosmic Bull

The New Moon of the first
Jupiter - Saturn conjunction of 1 May 0007 BC.



The Moon

'If Orion [The Shepherd of Anu] comes close to the moon: the days of the reign of the king will become long ...

Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*: p.297.

'If Adad thunders in the middle of Taurus: the king will conquer a country not belonging to him.'

Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*: p.97.



The Bull of Heaven (Taurus) depicted on an esoteric tablet from the Seleucid period. Reproduced from Hunger, *Astrological Reports to Assyrian Kings*: p.40.



New Moon in the stars of the Shepherd while the king is in the great cosmic creation bull.



The Shepherds that announce the birth of the messiah may be of the sky.

Luke's Gospel could be a piece of Mesopotamian sky narrative – a partial horoscope told in story.

In which case the birth of Christ was around 1 May 07 BCE

The drama of St Matthew's pericope then follows later.

Conclusion

- By considering all the components of the visual narratives more options become available for analysis.
- Furthermore by considering the style of astrology of that period, disregarded story elements begin to draw focus as possible sky elements rather than terrestrial artefacts.

Based on these new considerations it is possible that:

- St. Luke's Gospel is not a story purely designed to show Christ's humble nature but is primarily a Mesopotamian sky narrative – a horoscope in story.
- St. Matthew's Gospel, on the other hand, could be using the language of Hellenistic astrology and be referring to the kings as Spear Bearers who, via astrological lore of the day, will give gifts to the sun.
- The Star of Bethlehem with all its attributes can be explained by the unique version of a retrograde loop of Venus when observed from Bethlehem. This loop occurred 6 – 8 months after the 'birth' announcement made by the shepherds. But it is not the Venus but rather it is the whole sky narrative.