

ASPECTS OF THE STAR | MATTHEW 2:1-12

The star held significance as it indicated that the King of the Jews had been born. According to verse 2, the fact that they were searching for one "born king of the Jews," implies that they were looking for an infant. Verse 4 further emphasizes this as it demanded the birthplace of Christ, not where the Messiah would reside, but specifically where he would be born.

Not only does the star indicate that the Magi were looking for a baby, but also the star must signify the place in which the new King would be found, with a fair degree of specificity, according to verse 9.

When discussing the science of the Bible, it's important to understand that both biblical and scientific language about nature offer truth, but they do so from different perspectives. Biblical language is written from the perspective of human experience, portraying the world as people directly perceive and interact with it. On the other hand, scientific language attempts to describe the intricate details that happen "behind the scenes" of natural phenomena. It is improper to think the Bible is less truthful because it doesn't use the scientific language or perspective, as this suggests that there is only one valid way of expressing truth. Such an insistence is for the uneducated or for the agenda driven speaker.

HOW THE STAR COMMUNICATED ITS MESSAGE

A FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The Persian Magi possessed foundational knowledge of a religion that had undoubtedly evolved over the years but likely originated from Japheth, Noah's son. This belief system recognized a single God as the creator of everything. It also acknowledged an evil spirit in constant conflict with God. They believed that eventually, God would send a savior to initiate a perfect era, bring about the resurrection of the dead, and finally defeat evil. This savior would also restore humanity's relationship with God and his creations.

By the first century, it is known that the priests of the ancient Persian religion founded by Zarathustra, referred to as Magi, maintained a belief structure similar to Judaism. They would have been keen to learn more about the birth of the Messiah.

KNOWLEDGE OF SPECIFIC PROPHECIES

In addition to their foundational knowledge, the Magi would have been informed about the significance of the Jewish Messiah due to the Babylonian captivity. The teachings of Daniel, which had been preserved, would have undoubtedly been known to them. Daniel's prophecy specifically speaks of a "cutting off" of the Messiah (Daniel 9:24-27), which would have given the Magi an estimated timeframe for the birth of the Messiah, albeit a rough one. Additionally, they likely would have been aware of Balaam and his prophecy in Numbers 24:17, which speaks of the arrival of the Messiah as a star out of Jacob.

KNOWLEDGE OF ASTROLOGY

Astrology, also known as "the word of the stars," implies that stars have a "word" to convey. Biblical references suggest stars act as signs (Genesis 1:14, also refer to the term "signs" used in Genesis 4:15 and 9:12-13). They proclaim their "line" or message, as seen in Psalms 19:1-4, which can be compared with Isaiah 28:10.

I believe that contemporary Western astrology distorts ancient Hebrew and Mesopotamian astrology. As such, using modern astrology to interpret ancient astrology is therefore not appropriate.

The Magi were extraordinary astrologers who had been studying the skies for thousands of years before the events of Matthew 2. They knew that the birth of the King of the Jews would be marked by a star (Num. 24:17), and that the "cutting off" of the Messiah would occur 483 years **AFTER** the decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Dan. 9:25). Therefore, they logically deduced that a sign in the stars announcing the birth of the Messiah should appear prior to Daniel's year. Therefore, they began their search.

A KNOWLEDGE OF ASTRONOMY

The Magi, with their extensive knowledge and understanding of both astrology and astronomy, used these two domains in tandem to discern significant events. Astrology, for them, was akin to a language, a means of reading the celestial patterns and deriving messages from them. They looked to the stars and planets for signs, for a divine message. However, astronomy played a crucial role as well - it was the medium through which this celestial 'message' was delivered. The precise, scientific observation and understanding of celestial bodies and phenomena underpinned their astrological interpretations. Thus, while astrology provided the framework for understanding the 'message', astronomy was the 'messenger' that brought this message to them.

Astronomy, which literally means "law of the stars", is a scientific discipline that studies celestial objects and phenomena. It is a field that the Magi were particularly proficient in. They had an extensive understanding about the motion of the stars, both the "roaming stars," or planets, and the "fixed stars," or stars as we typically understand them. They could predict their positions with high accuracy for any given night, years into the future or past. This knowledge was essential for their astrological interpretations and predictions.

The arrival of a "new star," or the disappearance of one, is a common astronomical event and, as such, would not provide the Magi with any special or unique information. These occurrences are routine and do not communicate specific messages or herald significant events. The Bethlehem Star, therefore, was not likely a new star.

There are multiple explanations for the various convergences and appearances of new stars during the time period that aligns with the appearance of the Bethlehem star. It is highly probable that one of these astronomical events was what signaled to the Magi that the Messiah was about to be born. It could have been the specific convergence or the arrival of a new star in tandem with this convergence that the Magi interpreted as the sign to follow.

DO STARS SPEAK TODAY?

There is a message in the stars, but it is not a new one. It is the same message that has always been there. God created the stars for "signs," and they still serve that purpose today. However, it is essential to understand that these signs are not indications for each individual's life, but they convey a message about God's ultimate purpose in the world. For this reason, all of the world is "without excuse" (Romans 1:20).