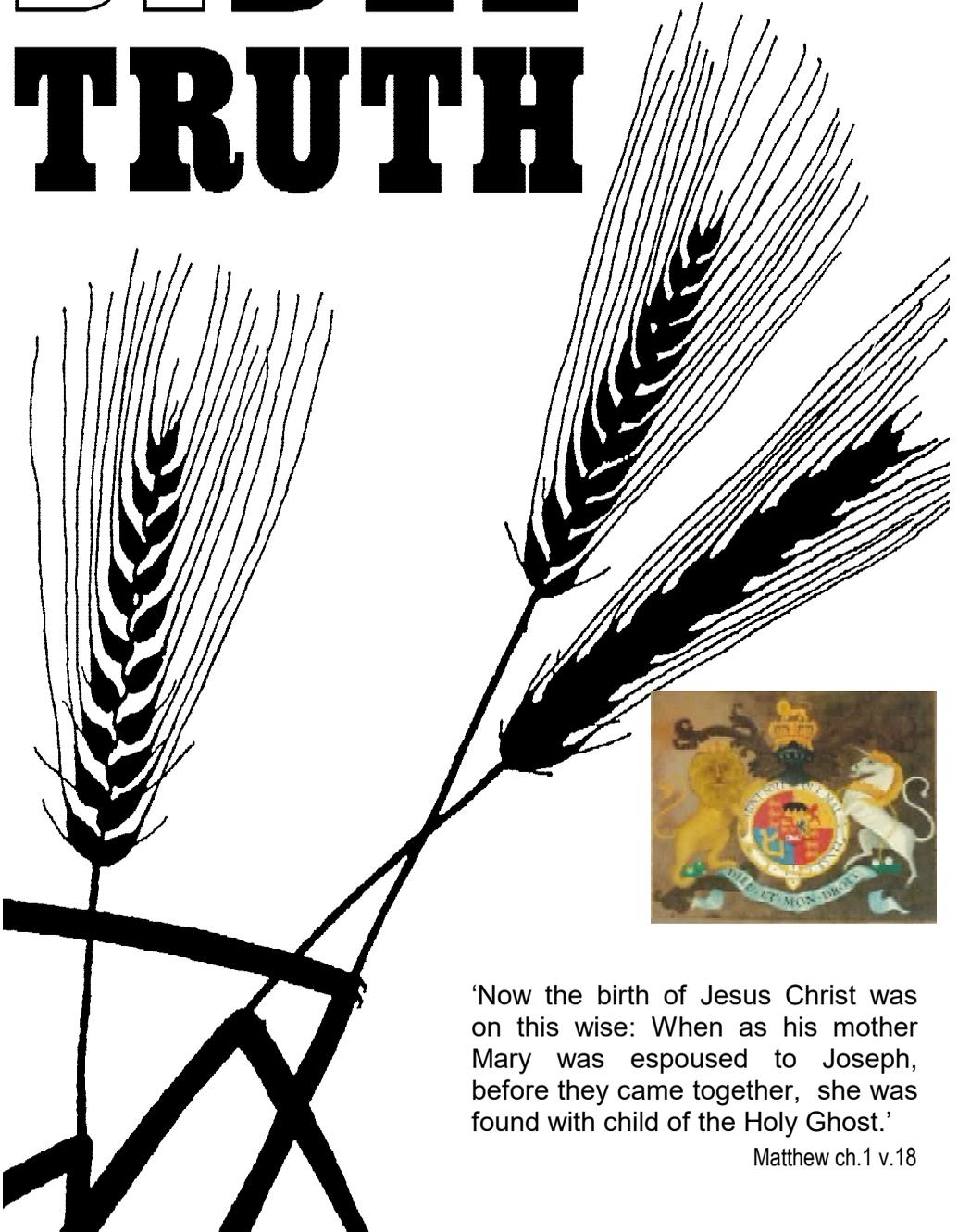


# BIBLE TRUTH

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'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.'

Matthew ch.1 v.18

# *The Star of Bethlehem*

## **What Was It and Where Did it Occur?**

compiled by Deanna Bray



‘And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:’

Genesis ch.1 v.14

God said that the stars were to be ‘for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years’. The Hebrew word for signs comes from the word, ‘to come’. So the word ‘signs’ refers to something or some One to come.

God gave to Adam and Eve the promise of the Messiah in, ‘And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel’.

Genesis ch.3 v.15

For four thousand years men waited for the Promised Seed to come.

According to the Psalms, it was God who named all the stars.

‘He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.’

Psalms 147 v.4

Over one hundred of these ancient names are preserved through Arabic and Hebrew, which are used by astronomers today, though the original meaning may be unknown to them. The names of the twelve signs or constellations of the zodiac go back to the beginning of the world. Jewish tradition, preserved by Josephus a Jewish historian who lived about 100 AD, states that this Bible astronomy was known by Adam, Seth, and Enoch.

The same constellations go back as far as 4000 BC in the ancient records of Egypt, Persia, and China. The evidence of the singular origin of names from God is in the similarity of the constellations in these ancient zodiacs.

It is thought that our written Scriptures began with Moses, about 1490 BC. But Adam lived at least 2500 years before that, so the revelation of the hope and promise which God gave to Adam and all mankind was preserved in the naming of the stars and their grouping in signs and constellations. Therefore, it was written that the stars give speech throughout all the earth and to the end of the world.

‘Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. ...’

Psalm 19 v.4

So we come to the story of the long awaited birth of the Messiah and of the wise men, who were wise men because they studied the heavens, and understood the signs and legends connected with them from the names that God had given them.

‘Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.’

Isaiah ch.7 v.14

They knew from Isaiah that a Virgin would conceive and bear a son. The constellation Virgo is the sign of the virgin mother from whom the divine and human Redeemer King was to be born. In this constellation, a woman is bearing a branch, containing the star Al Zimach, meaning in Arabic, the Branch, one of the names of the Christ (see in Zechariah chs.3 v.8 & 6 v.12, Jeremiah ch. 23 vv 5-6 and Isaiah ch. 4 v.2).

Associated with Virgo is the constellation, Coma, which shows a woman with an infant, and means the desired son, or the desired of all nations. This is the divine and human Seed of the woman, the promised and long-hoped-for Messiah among all nations, since the beginning of the world.

Herod enquired of the wise men and the Jewish priests to find out the time and place of Christ's birth.

‘And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet.’

Matthew ch.2 vv 4-5

They had established from prophetic scripture, that the place of Christ's birth would be Bethlehem.

‘But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.’

Micah ch.5 v.2

The wise men had seen His star in the east. What was this star? When did the sign or signs occur?

The star of Bethlehem was both a heavenly sign and a symbol of Christ. The Messiah is called,

‘ ... there shall come a Star out of Jacob, ...’

Numbers ch.24 v.17

‘ ... and the bright and morning star’.

Revelation ch.22 v.16

About two years before the birth of Christ, there was a heavenly sign, the same one that had occurred about three years before the birth of Moses, which had great import for the Hebrew nation. Moses had prophesied of the One Who was to come after him. Before the birth of Christ, this heavenly sign came not once but three times: in May, October, and December, a tripling of the sign. The event in December may have coincided with the time of the conception. Astronomical calculations today can confirm that this triple event occurred.

There were three successive conjunctions of the planets Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation Pisces, an extremely significant event to the Hebrews.

The significance of one such heavenly sign at the time of Moses caused the Egyptians to try to kill all the male Hebrew children. But later it was Herod who ordered the death of the male Hebrew children in Bethlehem, two years old and under in an attempt to destroy the Christ child.

There was another heavenly sign that the wise men saw and followed to Bethlehem, where it was at its zenith.

To herald the coming of the Messiah, a bright star that was visible even in the daytime appeared in the constellation Coma in the very head of the infant. This was probably a super nova that first appeared about 125 years before the birth of Christ and lasted until it faded about 150 years afterward. This star was also seen and recorded in Greece and China.

A few weeks after the time of the third of the triple signs in December, the constellation Virgo arose in the east. This may have been what the wise men meant by 'his star in the east'. It is likely that it was at this time that the wise men were prompted to travel five hundred to a thousand miles. They knew that the Messiah was about to be born and came to worship him.

Virgo and Coma were at their zenith over Bethlehem at the time of the spring equinox. This was the time of the annunciation to the virgin Mary of the coming birth. The brightest star in the heavens at this time was the super nova in Coma. Coma was again at its zenith over Bethlehem about three months later.

Finally, when the wise men came, the constellation Coma, with the super nova in the head of the infant, was again at its zenith over Bethlehem. The tradition is that the star was seen in reflection in the well of David at Bethlehem at midnight, proof that it was at its zenith in the town where Christ was born.

These, then, were the signs that the wise men saw: an unusual triple sign signifying the coming of the Messiah, the last sign of which coinciding with the conception of Christ; the rising of the constellation Virgo in the east shortly after the conception of Christ, which prompted them on their journey; and finally, the super nova in the head of the infant in the constellation Coma, at its zenith over Bethlehem when they arrived.

This study is not to be confused with the later counterfeit of astrology.

Sources of information -

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*The Witness of the Stars*, Ethelbert W. Bullinger, D.D., (the author of the notes in the Companion Bible), first published in England in 1893.

*The Companion Bible Notes*, compiled by D.Bray for Christmas programme, December 2006 & 2007.

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