

WISE MEN FROM THE EAST

1975

My introduction to astrology was really quite curious.

In 1963 I was appointed priest-in-charge of the Anglican parish of Cummins in South Australia. This is a farming area situated about 400 miles west of Adelaide. Its remoteness from the city meant that visits to Adelaide were infrequent, and much had to be purchased by mail order. I therefore joined a Book Club whose members were able to order from a range of selected books at discounted prices, listed in a catalogue which was received on a regular basis.

One of the books which I ordered was *Astrology* by Louis MacNeice. No doubt the description in the catalogue paralleled that printed on its dust cover. 'This is the only comprehensive and authoritative survey of astrology that takes no sides but presents to the modern reader all the facts that he needs to form his own judgement.'

As a 'modern reader' without any real understanding of astrology, this appeared to be an excellent book to place on my list. I suppose in a sense it was, because the end result of its reading was that I became seriously involved in astrology. But I fear for all the wrong reasons.

The final section of the book gave instructions on the erection and interpretation of the horoscope. A little experimentation soon revealed that these were hopelessly inadequate or in error. The end result of which was to convince me that if astrology had occupied the pre-eminent place that it once did for so many thousands of years, it must have been something much more than that described by the author.

In one place however there was a mention of "The London Faculty of Astrological Studies." I decided to try to make contact with this organisation, and after much searching was able to find an address and do so. The upshot was that eventually I enrolled as a student and attained its Diploma.

Obviously – given my profession – the story in St Matthew's Gospel of the visit of the Wise Men to the infant Jesus, now took on a new significance. In other reading I had come across the proposal made by Johannes Kepler that the 'star' was in fact a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. In 1975 the original article "Wise Men from the East" was published in the journal of the Federation of Australian Astrologers.

While the essay essentially deals with the Matthean subject matter, it was also (I suspect) my first 'apology' for astrology. What I tried to do was to show that the account is precise, consistent, and can be fitted into an accurate historical frame work.

That is, astrology as astrology is inextricably woven into the fabric of the gospel of St. Matthew. It was (if I remember aright) John Henry Cardinal Newman who said that the Church cannot celebrate that which is not itself holy. When therefore the Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany on 6th January each year, it may not be

inappropriate to remind it that it is also celebrating an astrological event of some consequence.

Probably the most well known astrological event in history was the visit of the Wise Men (as they are called in the Authorised King James version of the Bible) to the infant Jesus, which is recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel. However it is a story which is undeservedly neglected, both in astrological as well as in orthodox Christian circles.

No doubt this is because both of these traditions have developed a degree of reserve towards each other. However as I have some roots in both worlds, it may not be inappropriate for me to look at this event a little more seriously than either the astrologer or the theologian appears to have done in recent years.

So let us begin by looking at the account in the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel as it is translated in the New English Bible. Here the equivocal "Wise Men" have at least become honest astrologers!

Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers from the east arrived at Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who is born to be king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star and we have come to pay him homage". King Herod was greatly perturbed when he heard this; and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the chief priests and lawyers of the Jewish people and put before them the question, "Where is it that the Messiah is to be born?" "At Bethlehem in Judaea", they answered; and they referred him to the prophecy which reads; "Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are far from least in the eyes of the rulers of Judah, for out of you shall come a leader to be the shepherd of my people Israel".

Herod next called the astrologers to meet him in private, and ascertained from them the time when the star had appeared. He then sent them on to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and make a careful inquiry for the child. When you have found him report to me, so that I may go myself and pay him homage".

They set out at the King's bidding; and the star which they had seen at its rising went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay.

Matthew then tells us that having reached Bethlehem, the astrologers offered gifts to the child whom they found there, and departed from Judaea without returning to inform King Herod of their discovery. Herod, when he eventually realised that he had been deceived, was furious and made a barbaric attempt to kill the infant.

When Herod saw that the astrologers had tricked him, he fell into a passion, and gave orders for the massacre of all children in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood, of the age of two years or less, corresponding with the time he had ascertained from the astrologers.

We are of course all accustomed to seeing various parts of this story (apart from its pretty blood-thirsty conclusion) portrayed upon our Christmas Cards each year. While the artists responsible choose varying parts of the story as the basis for their works, all seem to agree upon one thing: the Birth Star shone with exceptional and unmistakable brightness in the heavens.

Yet we are immediately confronted by a significant problem. If this star shone so brightly and so beautifully, how was it that it had apparently passed unnoticed by Herod and his court? The ancient world had little lighting of its cities at night, and the heavens would have shone with undiminished brightness. How would it have been possible for such an event to have been observed by the astrologers, and yet apparently not seen by others? And why would these men then make an arduous journey of some 600 to 700 miles by camel, at the bidding of what seems to have been such an uncertain object?

Firstly (as we mentioned previously) the “astrologers” in our account are the “Wise Men” of the older Authorised Version. The word in the Greek text is “Magoi” (Magoi) who were originally a priestly caste from Media, distinguished in appearance by the wearing of flowing white robes and a tall pointed hat. It is from them that not only does our word “magician” come, but also the traditional pointed hat of both the witch and of the dunce. The last has its own curious derivation, but that is not our concern at the moment. They were men of considerable learning and well-versed in the arts and sciences of their day.

The journey from Media to Jerusalem is some 700 miles. If we allow their progress by camel to have been about 20 miles a day, then this implies a travelling time of perhaps 35 days. With rest days – and some days of slower than average progress – we may not be far out in suggesting a total time for their journey of some six weeks. After this extensive travelling they were finally admitted to King Herod’s court where they inquired, “Where is the child who is born to be king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star”.

The translation with which we may be more familiar, and is generally used in the older versions, says “For we have seen his star in the East”, Is there significance in this difference in the translations?

The usual Greek phrase in the New Testament for the words “in the east” is “en tai anatolai” (εν ται ανατολαι), but in the Matthean account of the visit of the Magi the phrase is “en te anatole” (εν τη ανατολη). This is the singular form of the normally plural phrase. This particular form of the words occurs in four other instances in the New testament, and in each of these cases the usage describes the rising of the sun, rather than the direction east.

It appears therefore that what we have is actually a technical astrological term, the most satisfying rendering of which would be “we saw his star rising in the first rays of dawn”. The term used today which would correspond with the ancient “en te anatole” is “heliacal rising” or “rising with the sun”.

But we should remember that when the astrologers were interviewed by King Herod they did not say, “We have made an interesting observation of a heliacal rising”.

Rather they said, “Where is the child born to be king of the Jews?” What led them to put such a question? What particular series of events would have been of such consequence as to lead them to undertake a journey of close to six weeks under difficult circumstances, in order to make such an inquiry?

According to the traditions of Chaldean astrology the Zodiacal sign of Pisces had special associations with Israel, and particularly with the Jewish concept of the Messiah. As well it is generally agreed by astronomers that the precession of the equinox caused the First Point of Aries to enter the constellation of Pisces some time in the ten years preceding the commencement of the Christian era.

We may therefore assume that astrologers in the ancient world would have been alert to any celestial event of significance occurring in the sign of Pisces at this particular time. Moreover, for many such an event would have had a natural association with the nation of Israel and presumably with its expectations of a Messiah. What kinds of occurrences therefore would fit this scenario?

The two possibilities that immediately come to mind are either a comet or a supernova. These unfortunately seem to be far too obvious for our story. We must remember that the “star” which the wise men saw was not sufficiently spectacular to have been observed by others. Certainly by any at King Herod’s court.

There is however one series of events which we know to have happened within these ten years which could well provide a solution to our problem. This was a number of conjunctions of the Great Planets Jupiter and Saturn within the sign of Pisces. Not only would these be of exceptional importance – bearing in mind that these would be the first Great Conjunctions in the sign of Pisces for the Piscean Age – but also that both planets carried some special implications. Jupiter is by nature associated with rulership and royalty, while Saturn was held by Chaldean tradition to be the protector of Israel. The Latin writer Tacitus in fact equated Saturn with the God of Israel.

This solution was first proposed by Johannes Kepler in 1603, when he had observed a similar conjunction in December of that year. The possibility that such an event could have been the ‘star’ of the Magi immediately leapt to his mind.

As well (as we shall see later) this event was not a simple conjunction, but actually the coming together of both planets three times within the space of a few months, due to both bodies becoming retrograde during the period. This would add enormous significance to the events, as such multiple conjunctions occur in any particular sign only once in about 800 years.

The advantages of this hypothesis are three-fold.

Firstly it meets our criterion of an exceptionally important celestial event occurring in an appropriate location in the zodiac.

Secondly it is astrological and not astronomical in nature. That is, its significance lies not in its observational impact (its brightness, for example) but rather in its interpretation. Thus not being an event which was noticeable to the casual observer, it

is quite reasonable to propose that King Herod and his court would have been unaware of it.

Thirdly, with the aid of modern computer generated tables we are able to reconstruct the events quite precisely.

Let us then assume that the event which had such significance for our wise men was indeed the first Great Conjunctions in the sign of Pisces at the commencement of the Piscean Age. We may then draw the timetable of St. Matthew's narrative along the following lines.

At the end of February 7 BC Jupiter moved out of Aquarius towards Saturn, which had already been in the sign of Pisces for some considerable time. Since the Sun was also in Pisces at this time the planet naturally was not visible. The laws of planetary motion were not precisely formulated until the 16th century (by Kepler himself of course). Thus the astrologers of this period were not able to calculate the date on which the planet would again become visible, but simply had to wait and conduct daily observations.

On 12th April 7 BC both planets rose heliacally (in the "first rays of dawn" or *en te anatole*), some 8 degrees apart. From the relative positions of Jupiter and Saturn the astrologers knew from experience that they would soon form a close conjunction. That is, once they had observed these two bodies "rising in the east" they knew that it was inevitable that a major astrological event would occur. It was at this point – at this first observation – that they would realise that the "star" of the "child who is to be king of the Jews" had arisen.

Then on the 27th May 7 BC – visible in the morning sky for about two hours before dawn – the two planets lay in exact longitudinal conjunction in 21 degrees Pisces, a little over one degree apart in latitude. A very close but not precise conjunction.

However not long after this both planets became retrograde, and a second conjunction occurred on 3rd October 7 BC, in 18 degrees Pisces. Then resuming direct motion, a third conjunction was formed on the 4th December in the same year in 16 degrees Pisces.

At the end of January in the year 6 BC Jupiter moved out of Pisces into Aries.

Now while these Great Conjunctions were obviously of considerable astrological importance, were they sufficiently so to lead to the long and difficult journey undertaken by the "Wise Men" of the gospel narrative?

One of the most significant events of Jewish history was that which is called "The Exile".

At the beginning of the 6th century BC the country had been overrun by the Babylonian armies, and after a dreadful siege the city of Jerusalem was taken. The victorious armies laid waste to the country side and completely demolished the Holy City. All leaders of commerce, learning, religion, and politics – indeed all notable citizens of any kind – were forcible transported to Babylon. This exile lasted until the

empire fell to the Persian armies in about 520 BC, at which time the Jews were given permission to return to their own country.

However it seems that a very large number (if not a majority) elected to remain in Babylon where they had prospered in numerous fields. No doubt a number would have studied at the great school of astrology at Sippar. This significant encounter between Jupiter (the planet of royalty) and Saturn (the planet of Israel and the Messiah) within Israel's own zodiacal sign of Pisces, must have been exciting to such Jewish astrologers.

This would be all the more so at the very dawn of the Piscean age, of which they would have been excitedly aware. If ever there were to be an astrologically appropriate moment for the birth of the Messiah, this would appear to be that time. The Age of the Messiah had dawned, and to see this with their own eyes may well have been the driving force behind their journey from the East.

That is, the "Wise Men from the East" were neither kings nor gentiles (as our Christian traditions have suggested), but rather expatriate Jewish astrologers from the college of Sippar near Babylon. It is also quite possible that their journey may not have been totally the result of religious zeal, but they may have rather been sent by the other Jewish members of their school – with their trip financed as a kind of research scholarship – in order to determine whether or not a suitable candidate for messiahship had in fact been born at this time.

Their probable Jewish status also casts light upon other aspects of the story. Their ready acceptance at Herod's court is in accord with a welcome extended to important countrymen visiting from a renowned centre of world learning. Their interest in and familiarity with Jewish customs and scripture, as well as their apparent knowledge of Palestinian geography, is also in accord with such a status. No doubt the term "magi" which was given to them, had by that time simply become a generic word for any person versed in their skills and sciences. In later Roman days astrologers were called "Chaldeans" regardless of race or origin.

It may be objected however, that if they were indeed Jews, why was it that they did not appear to know the scriptural prophecy concerning the birthplace of the Messiah? This may be explained by suggesting that they would perhaps quite naturally have expected to find a royal birth occurring in a royal situation. Finding no knowledge of such an event in King Herod's court they asked the question, "Well then, does any one know where the child who is born to be king of the Jews is likely to be?" A conference was held, and it was suggested that if the birth had not occurred in Jerusalem (and none had knowledge of a birth which seemed to present a likely candidate), then the scriptures pointed to Bethlehem as the logical alternative place.

However, let us briefly return to Babylon in order to put their journey into perspective.

On 27th May 7 BC the first close conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces was observed from the roof of the observatory at the school of astrology at Sippar. As was mentioned previously, astrologers had been waiting anxiously for this since they first sighted the two planets at their heliacal rising and realised that a Great Conjunction

was imminent. However it was mid summer in Mesopotamia. Only the most foolish or most desperate would make such a journey as they were contemplating during this season.

But as they also observed that the daily motion of the planets was decreasing, they knew that the bodies would therefore both shortly regress, and that the likelihood of a second and third conjunction was very high. So they waited until the second conjunction did in fact occur. This fell on the 3rd October 7 BC. By a remarkable coincidence this was the Jewish feast of Atonement. Perhaps they felt this to be some sort of divine omen, and so preparations were made at once for the “research team” to leave, and to commence its journey to the land of their fathers.

About six weeks would have seen them arriving at Jerusalem. That is, towards the end of November. They at once would have sought an audience with King Herod, or perhaps more likely would have been requested to appear before him as their arrival in Jerusalem would have aroused much notice and curiosity. Naturally they immediately inquired regarding the birth of a royal infant: “Where is the child who is born king of the Jews, for we have observed the heliacal rising of his star?” After discussion it is decided that they should investigate births at Bethlehem, and so they left for this village.

Now Bethlehem lies about 5 miles almost due south from Jerusalem. That is, towards the ecliptic in the northern hemisphere. They may well have set out towards the town during the twilight hours of the evening of the 4th December 7 BC. The journey would only have taken about an hour and they probably anticipated finding accommodation in the village that night, and so be able to commence their inquiries first thing in the morning.

On this night however Jupiter and Saturn were again together in the last of the series of Great Conjunctions. This would have been visible in the evening sky due south of Jerusalem, in the direction which they would have to take in order to reach Bethlehem. St. Matthew’s account says, and the star which they had seen at its rising went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay. One may allow a little poetic imagination to the evangelist. As the travellers moved down the road the “star” would have appeared to move ahead of them, and then stop as they themselves stopped at Jerusalem.

We do not of course know from all this the actual date of Jesus’ birth. The impression that we gain from King Herod’s later actions in slaughtering the infants of Bethlehem suggests that the first observation of the star was possibly up to two years prior to the visit of the Wise Men. All children of the age of two years or less were to be killed corresponding to the time he ascertained from the astrologers. However this is not necessarily the case, and it is very likely that Herod chose the age of two years simply because he wanted to be quite sure that the child who posed a potential threat to his throne was caught in the net of infanticide .

If we assume that Jesus was born at or about the time of the first of the Great Conjunctions, then we have a late May date in the year 7 BC. By the time that King Herod had become sure that the Wise Men were no longer “searching carefully” for the child – but had secretly left the country – the date may well have been about

February 6 BC. Thus the infant may have been from 9 to 12 months old. The death of all children under two years would therefore resolve the issue without the need to inquire too closely into birth dates.

It is also interesting to speculate upon the method which the astrologers may have used to choose the infant Messiah. It is not realistic to assume (as St. Matthew appears to do) that the star in some way “stopped” above the place where the child was, and all that they needed to do was to walk through the appropriate door. They may (for example) have interviewed the parents of all children born close to the time of the first Great Conjunction, and perhaps chosen the candidate with the most appropriate genealogy for messiahship.

In this regard we may note that Matthew actually begins his Gospel with a Table of Descent for Jesus. This may not be totally unrelated to his later story and the astrologers’ recognition of the Messiah whom they sought. If this is the case, then the infant whom they chose was one directly descended from King David, and most probably would have been born on the 27th May 7 BC.

This may appear at first sight to be a rather early dating for the birth of Jesus, whom we normally assume to have been born close to the first year of the Christian era. However St. Matthew also tells us that the child Jesus was taken to Egypt almost immediately after his birth (so escaping King Herod’s attempt to assassinate him) until his parents heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judaea in the place of his father Herod. Since we know that King Herod died in 4 BC, it is obviously necessary that Jesus should have been born some time prior to this. Thus the date 7 BC appears to be quite reasonable from this point of view.

St. Luke’s gospel too has some evidence supporting a May date for the birth. In one place his account reads, Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields keeping watch through the night over their flocks. In Hebron grass temperatures fall well below freezing from December to February, and no shepherds would be watching sheep over night in the fields during these months. This therefore points to the birth occurring during the warmer months of the year.

It is also interesting to note that Clement of Alexandria, writing in the third century, suggested May 20th as a possible date for the birth of Jesus.

Unfortunately other evidence which St. Luke gives concerning the birth of Jesus – which one might assume to be helpful – only serves to confuse the issue. He writes that Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem (where Jesus was born) on account of a requirement related to a census that was held when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Sulpicius Quirinius was certainly a governor of Syria and we know that he did in fact hold a census. However this was in 6 AD when Judaea was reduced to the status of a Roman Province, an impossibly late date for Jesus’ birth.

Quirinius held the census in order to determine the amount of tribute that the new province would be liable to pay. The records of the governorships of Syria are quite clear. Sentius Sturnius was governor from 9 BC to 6 BC; Quintilius Varus from 6 BC to 4 AD; and Sulpicius Quirinius from 4 AD onward.

This is not to say that there was no census held at the time of Jesus' birth, but if one were held then it is not one of which we have historical records (apart from St. Luke's reference) and certainly not the one conducted by Quirinius. This account therefore offers us no further information regarding the birth date of Jesus, which must have occurred prior to 4 BC.

It may be mentioned that there are other difficulties in reconciling the birth accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke.

St. Matthew tells us that the Holy Family were living at Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth and did not leave there until they fled in order to escape King Herod's troops. Then some time after 4 BC (when the king died) they returned to Palestine, but settled in Nazareth. On the other hand St. Luke appears to make their stay at Bethlehem a very brief one, having travelled down there from their permanent home at Nazareth simply for the purpose of the census. He also makes no mention of a sojourn in Egypt.

This is a chronology into which it is not possible to fit realistically the account of the visit of the Wise Men, as it really demands that they should have left for Jerusalem at least six weeks before the first Great Conjunction in order to be at Bethlehem just after the birth. This of course would have been before they could have been certain of the first conjunction even occurring, let alone of observing it. There are therefore reasons for being cautious in the use of the information presented to us by St. Luke.

So let us draw this part of our exploration to a conclusion.

Towards the end of May in the year 7 BC – and in all probability on the 27th day of that month according to our present reckoning – Joshua ben-Joseph was born at Bethlehem. In the twilight hours close to the 4th of December of that same year expatriate Jewish scholars from Sippar near Babylon, impelled by astrological curiosity, came to see the one whom they hoped would fulfil the long expected dreams of the Jewish people.

Now – like the Wise Men themselves – we too have made a considerable journey, and having come thus far it is difficult to resist the temptation to see whether or not it is possible to erect a horoscope for Jesus. Since the astrologers must have assumed that the child was born close to the time of the first Great Conjunction of the Piscean age in the sign of Pisces – and that this assumption was accurate enough for them to be able to locate the infant at Bethlehem – it will be instructive in the first instance to inspect the chart of the visible planets for this date.

Using the Tuckerman tables, the conjunction formed at 8.45 am Greenwich Mean Time, on the 27th May 7 BC. The chart of the planetary positions is shown in Figure One.

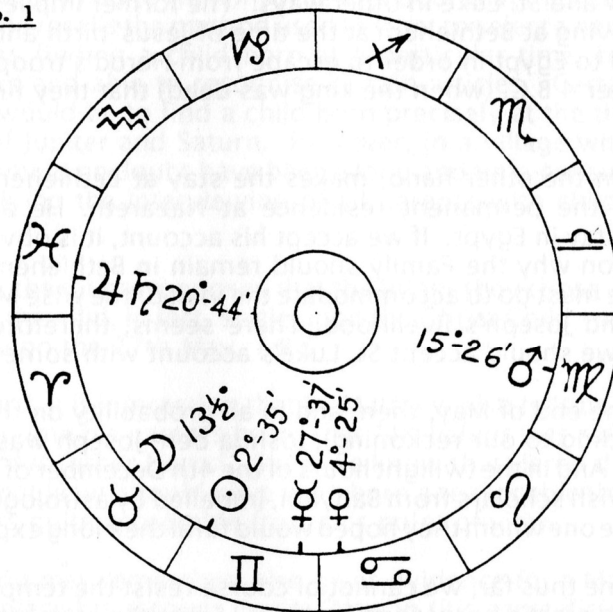
Two – or possible three – things stand out in this configuration.

1. The first is the opposition between Mars and the conjunct planets.

2. The second is the “bowl” shaping of the pattern, which according to Marc Jones is indicative of those who wish to share their abilities and gifts with others
3. The third is the almost total lack of any other important aspect or feature.

Thus the whole significance of the chart lies in Pisces and its planets. Apart from this it is a very ordinary map indeed. Naturally no significant alterations to this pattern will occur within the space of those days that we may allow as our “orb of probability” of the birth date.

CHART No. 1



The Conjunction in Pisces, 27th May, 7 BC.

Is it possible to go further and suggest a probable horoscope?

Three possibilities seem to suggest themselves.

The first – and probably that which the astrologers themselves assumed – is that the birth occurred at the time of exactitude of the conjunction. That is, at 8.45 am Greenwich Mean Time, or with the necessary allowances for the accuracy of our tables, between 11.00 am and 11.30 am local time at Bethlehem on the 27th May, 7 BC.

The second is that the birth occurred with the conjunct planets rising at the horizon, as this also would seem to have an appropriateness in the circumstances. This time would have been between 1.00 am and 2.00 am local time on the 27th May.

The third is the traditional midnight birth.

These three possible charts are shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4. Have we any compelling reasons for preferring one about the other two?

CHART No. 2

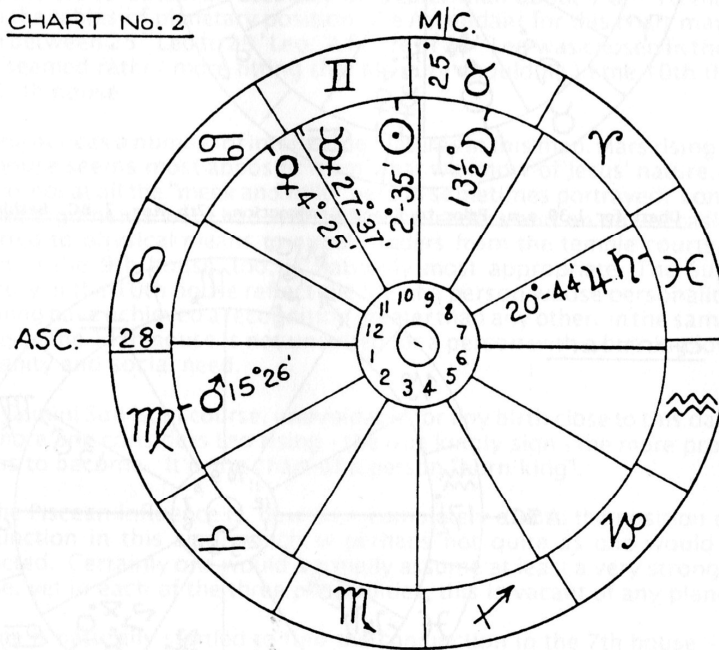


Chart for Exactitude of Conjunction, 27th May, 7 BC. Bethlehem 11.30 a.m.

CHART No. 3

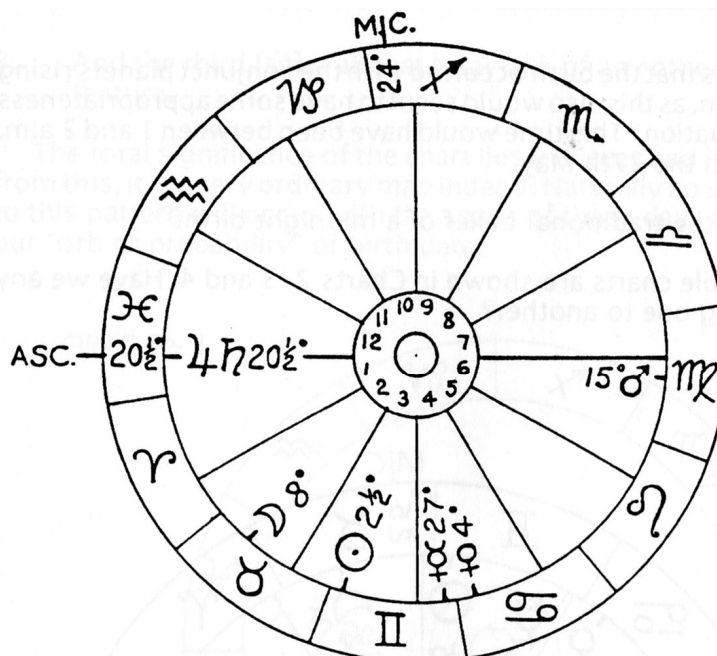


Chart for 1.30 a.m. Prior to Exact Conjunction, 27th May, 7 BC. Bethlehem.

CHART No. 4

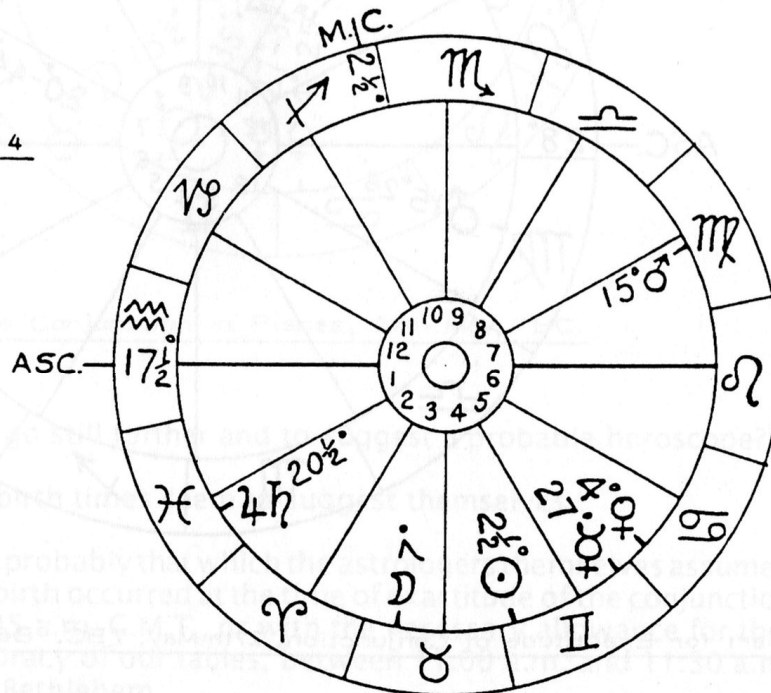


Chart for Midnight Prior to Exact Conjunction, 27th May, 7 BC. Bethlehem.

Of the three the second – while there is some symbolic appropriateness in the conjunct planets associated with the Ascendant – it is in fact the least satisfactory. It seems to be quite inappropriate that the Moon should fall in the Second House, even though a Piscean Ascendant is superficially attractive. A case too may be made for the Sun in the Third House. However one is at a loss to explain the significance of Mercury and Venus in the Fourth House from what is known of Jesus' life.

In a similar way the traditional midnight birth is not greatly encouraging. Certainly the two conjuncted planets in the First House are helpful, but the presumed importance of the Fourth and Fifth Houses in this map is hard to justify.

We are forced then to examine more carefully the chart erected for the exact time of the conjunction (as near as we can ascertain this). Since it is not possible to obtain an accuracy of greater than + or – ten minutes from the tables of planetary position, the Ascendant for this chart may vary from between 25° Leo to 29° Leo. A figure of 28° Leo was finally chosen, as it seemed rather more fitting that Mercury should lie in the Tenth rather than the Eleventh House.

There are a number of interesting features in this chart. Mars rising in the First House seems appropriate from what we know of Jesus' nature. Certainly he was not the 'meek and mild' person sometimes portrayed. Long and heated arguments were held with religious leaders, and on one occasion he resorted to physical violence to expel traders from the temple courts.

The Moon in the Ninth House is naturally very appropriate also. The Sun and Mercury in the Tenth House reflect the life of a person whose personality and teaching have achieved a recognition perhaps greater than any other historical figure.

In the same way Venus in the Eleventh House is not unsuited to a person with a burning love for humanity and social equality.

A Gemini Sun is unavoidable for any birth close to this date, but the more one considers Leo rising – the true kingly sign – the more proper it seems to become. It is the chart of a person “born king”.

The Piscean influence is however completely due to the position of the conjunction in this sign, which in its mundane relationship is perhaps not quite as would have been expected. Certainly one would normally assume at least a very strong Twelfth House, yet in each of the three possible charts this house is vacant of any planet.

It is then rather startling to find the conjunction in the Seventh House, since certainly neither marriage nor commerce were traditionally a part of Jesus’ life. However this is also the house of the deepest possible ties with others, whether in friendship or in enmity. Perhaps therefore when one remembers the enmity, argument, and hostility which surrounded his public ministry, as well as the Christian belief which holds that he was a person who shared mankind’s lot and estate in a way that no other could, there is a certain significance in the configuration. Indeed, St. Paul talks of the Church as being “the bride of Christ”.

There was also in Jesus’ life a sense of unity with others that should be reflected in the chart at some point. It is interesting to remember that in horary astrology the Seventh House is considered as the one which represents “all extraordinary achievement”. This is then a chart which does deserve to be considered seriously.

Of course the most striking thing that is apparent in the chart is that the birth occurs with the Sun in orb of conjunction to the midheaven. Again this is singularly appropriate, certainly far more so than the traditional view that it was in opposition to the mid heaven (that is, the midnight birth is one with the Sun conjunct to the I.C.). Never the less one must still admit that a birth time approaching midday is one that has never traditionally been considered. Nor is the reason for this hard to find.

St. Luke provides us with this account. *Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch through the night over their flock, when suddenly there stood before them an angel of the Lord, and the brightness of the Lord shone around them. They were terror struck, but the angel said, “Do not be afraid; I have good news for you. There is great joy coming to the whole people. Today in the city of David a deliverer has been born to you – the Messiah, the Lord.*

Naturally generations of Christians have assumed that the angelic message came virtually simultaneously with the birth of the child. However this is not necessarily the case.

According to St. Luke the angel said, *Todaya deliverer has been born.* One is not in the least compelled to believe that this event had occurred during the last few minutes, or even during the hours of darkness. The angel is referring to an event that has already been accomplished. If the message was delivered in the late evening (rather than in the small hours of the morning as we tend to assume) it could quite naturally be interpreted that the birth had occurred during the previous daylight hours.

There would therefore seem to be nothing in this particular narrative that precludes a midday birth.

Perhaps there is also one other minor indication to enforce this. When the shepherds arrive to see the child everything seems to be quiet and in order. The baby has been washed and wrapped, and is sleeping in the manger. Mary and Joseph too seem able to receive visitors without too much ado. It appears reasonable to assume that a certain amount of time has passed since the birth took place.

Thus, there appears to be good reasons for proposing that Jesus was born at the time of the first Great Conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in Pisces. In one sense this may be itself considered as the “birth day” of the Piscean age. And at this time, close to 11.30 in the morning local time on the 27th May in the year 7 BC, Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem.

In itself the horoscope for this birth is one that promises leadership and distinction. However it is only in retrospect that its full implications can be judged, and the appropriateness of its significance for this unique life assessed.

A Note on the Charts

It will be observed that only the visible planets have been shown on the charts, and that the method of domification is that of the Equal House system. That is, the horoscopes are cast in the terms of those techniques that astrologers of the last decade before the Christian era had at their disposal. Ptolemy’s *Tetrabiblos* - which is the earliest extant description of a house system – employs the Equal House method, but calls it the usage “of the ancient”. In this he seems to be referring to the work of Petosiris who is presumed to have introduced the system about 140 BC. It is interesting, therefore, to seek to interpret the chart from these factors alone, thus to some degree placing ourselves in the shoes of “the Wise Men from the East”.