

Astral Prophecy in Revelation 12:1-7

The hermeneutical genre known as Astral Prophecy refers to the study of interpreting and understanding the meanings of certain astronomical predictions written with celestial verbiage in the Bible to identify key concepts or events. This interpretive method accompanies the symbolism of the context as it would have been known to the original authors and recipients of the writing.

Some scholars have used astral prophecy, the ancient astrological practices of both Jewish and Gentile audiences and the symbolism of the heavenly bodies described in Revelation 12:1-7 to understand the events of Matthew 2:1-2. Simply put, they believe the author of Revelation used celestial language tethered to the Old Testament to describe in hindsight how the Gentile Magi would have known about the birth of Jesus, which we can now read in Matthew 2:2.

They suggest the celestial language used in Revelation 12:1-7 is centered around the prophesized birth of the Messiah. John quotes the Messianic Psalm 2:9 to describe the boy.

Revelation 12:5 *She gave birth to a Son, a male who is going to rule all nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and to his throne."*

Psalm 2:9 *You will break them with an iron scepter, you will shatter them like pottery.*

While some debate exists between identifying the woman giving birth as either Israel or Mary, there is widespread acceptance that the male child is Jesus.

The quote from Psalm 2 reminds the reader that the arrival of the Messiah would begin the restoration of all nations. Every nation would be blessed. The seed of Abraham would bless the entire world.

Genesis 12:3 *I will bless those who bless you, I will curse anyone who treats you with contempt, and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*

Galatians 3:14 *The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we would receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

The incarnation of Jesus was the death knell of the divine beings, Psalm 82:6-8, who governed the other nations of the world, Deuteronomy 32:8, and his arrival was telegraphed in a symbolic understanding of the constellations, and it was visible to both the Jewish and Gentile worlds of the Ancient Near East.

Paul writes in Romans 10:18 *Their voice has gone out to the whole earth and their words to the end of the world.* This is a direct quote of Psalm 19:4 that describes the way the stars "communicate" the glory of God.

Psalm 19:1-4 *The heavens declare the glory of God and the expanse proclaims the works of his hands. Day after day they pour out speech; night after night they communicate knowledge. There is no speech, there are no words; their voice is not heard. Their message has gone out to the whole earth and their words to the end of the world.*

This is why the Gentile Magi could understand the astral signs. It was part of God's plan.

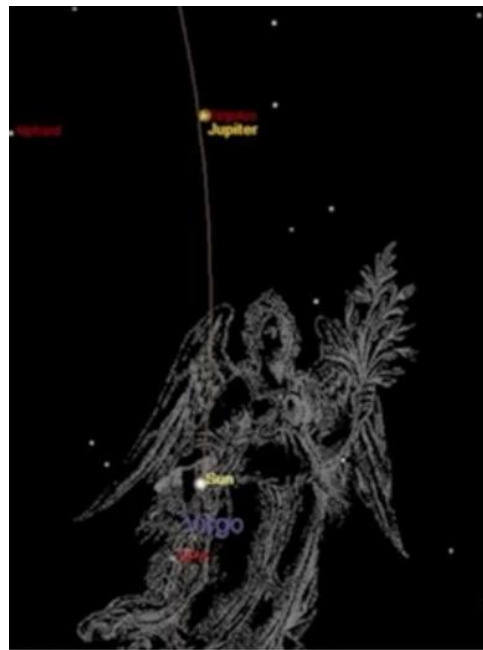
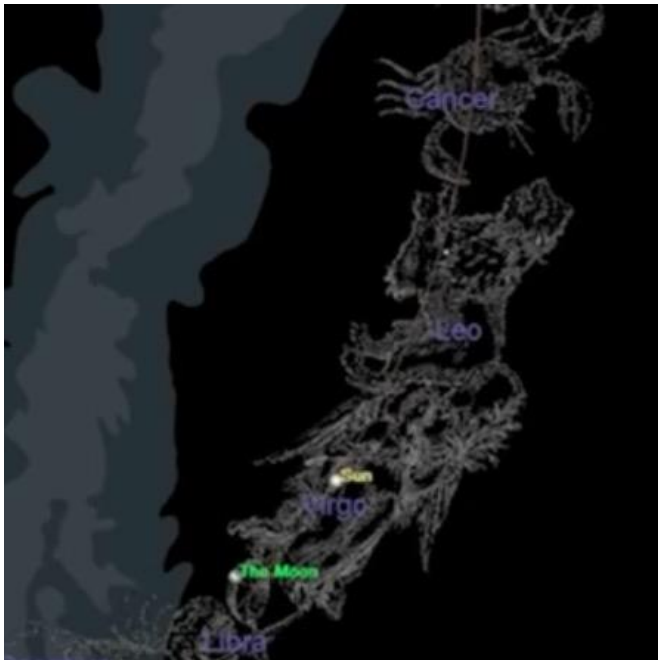
And here's where our modern astronomy software enters. Astronomy software can be run to display the patterns of the constellations on any given date, even into the past.

Programing the software to include the planets and descriptions found in Revelation 12:1-7 yields very interesting results.

Revelation 12:1 *A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head.*

These four components, a woman, the sun, the moon and the 12 stars are illustrated here as being seen in the Jerusalem sky.

Using the Qumran calendar, in 3bc the sun would have "clothed" Virgo, the virgin, and only female constellation in the sky, between August 27th and September 15th. Different astronomers will account for the 12 stars around her head in different ways. The only time the moon is at the feet of Virgo during these days during the time that she is clothed with the sun is between 6:15pm-7:45pm on September 11th. Additionally, this is the precise time when Jupiter (the King Planet) and Regulus (the King Star) are aligned directly above Virgo on the ecliptic, in the constellation Leo (the Lion). Since we know the Magi were thinking of the religious import of celestial signs, these two phenomena would have signified that a royal birth would occur, the birth of a king.



In fact, one month prior to the alignment of Jupiter and Regulus, Jupiter was in conjunction with the planet Venus. This is also significant because Venus (the Morning Star Planet) was seen as the goddess of fertility named Ishtar in Gentile astrology. Her alignment with Jupiter (the Great Father) would have also signaled an upcoming royal birth.

There is cohesive evidence also for the dragon mentioned in this passage.

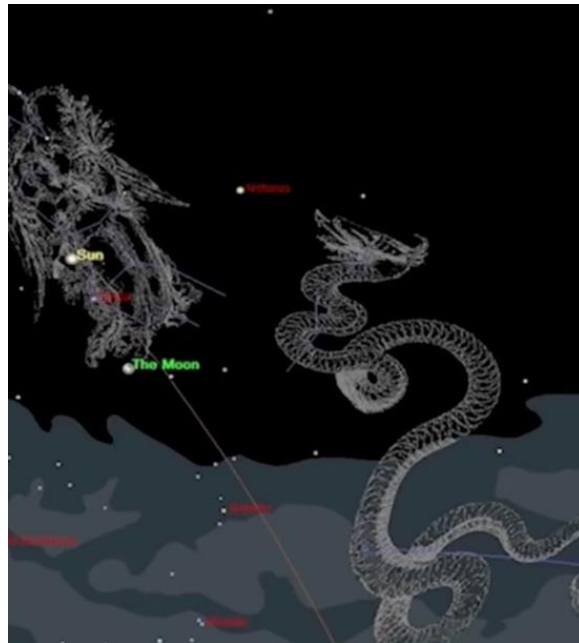
Revelation 12:3-4

Then another sign appeared in heaven: There was a great fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven crowns. Its tail swept away a third of the stars in heaven and hurled them to the earth. And the dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she did give birth it might devour her child.

In the ancient skies over Jerusalem the constellations at the feet of Virgo were combined. Today we identify them as Libra and Scorpio, but back then they were one. It was a scorpion-like creature with pincers. Additionally, there is also Hydra, found just off the ecliptic, but still present in front of Virgo. Both were known by the essence of their forms as dragons.

The symbology of the Old Testament agrees that the chaos creature identified in Revelation 12:9 as *the great dragon...the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan...* is the original rebel of Eden.

Genesis 3:1 *Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made...*



The celestial imagery of Revelation 12 describes the narrative of the Scriptures and marks the defeat of the serpent.

This is perhaps communicated in some of the messianic prophecies in Isaiah.

Isaiah 60:1-3 *Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord shines over you. For look, darkness will cover the earth, and total darkness the peoples; but the Lord will shine over you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to your shining brightness.*

Luke also connects the incarnation of Jesus to the Old Testament using potential prophetic imagery.

Luke 3:4-6 quotes Isaiah 40:3-5. *A voice of one crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the wilderness; make a straight highway for our God in the desert. Every valley will be lifted up, and every mountain and hill will be leveled; the uneven ground will become smooth and the rough places, a plain. And the glory of the Lord will appear, and all humanity together will see it, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.*

Some scholars teach that *all humanity together* could see it because it was patterned in the stars.

And finally, the date of September 11th, 3bc coincides with the beginning of the month of Rosh-Hashanah, Tishri 1 in the ancient Jewish calendar. Tishri is the starting point of the civil year and in the Southern Kingdom, it marked the beginning reigns of the Davidic line of monarchs, it was the coronation day for the King of Judah. And on September 11th, 3bc, it identified that the Lion of Judah, the King of Kings, was born.

So, what does this all mean?

At the very least we are confronted with the vastness and power of God. His glory is evidenced in ways we don't normally think about.

The Scriptures are deeper than we can dig.

Paul reminds us in Romans 1:20 *For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.*

It is amazing that God's eternal power and divine nature were witnessed by *Gentiles* in the nativity narrative, illustrating his great love in his life, death, resurrection and ascension for all humanity.

We need to take the Scriptures for what they say, and what they meant to the original audiences. Only then does the depth of God's love, the power of his plan and his might to accomplish it become clear.

And from that foundation then, we can discover our role in his plan and purpose.

For further research:

Earnest Martin: *The Star that Astonished the World* (Academy for Scriptural, 1996)

Bruce Malina: *On the Genre and Message of Revelation* (Baker 1993)

Bruce Malina and John Pilch: *Social Science Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Fortress Press, 2000)

Michael Heiser: *The Portent* (Defender, 2017)