

Is the universe a giant time clock?

Rick Larson's 2007 movie *The Star of Bethlehem* makes a fascinating case that the arrival of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago was no accident. The entire Old Testament spoke about the coming of the Jewish messiah, which is accepted to have taken place about 2-3 BC in the little town of Bethlehem, Israel. Most people don't believe Jesus was actually born on Dec. 25, but rather that was possibly the first Christmas when the magi actually came out for their paramount visit. Matthew's Gospel quotes the ancient prophet Micah (5:2,4) that a star would be for the coming of Christ's birth in Bethlehem. Larson's movie shows through astronomical software around mid-September of 3 BC that Jupiter (King Planet), Regulus (King Star) were in conjunction signifying the Holy Ghost's conception with Mary.

Nine months later, on June 17, 2 BC, when Jupiter and Venus (the mother planet) were in conjunction, Jesus was born. This is when the Magi left Babylon. Meeting King Herod later, the ruler was astonished that these professional stargazers came to pay tribute to another king in Herod's territory.



Neel Roberts
The Sky's the Limit

The Holy Bible states plainly that the bright star stopped right over the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:9) and they rejoiced that the prophecies all came true. The chances of such events happening by accident is irrefutably unlikely. Technology for the first time in history allows us to go back in history and peak into ancient skies to recreate these events. This Christmas, check out the Star of Bethlehem and decide if this story is true — that Jesus was the saviour who came 2,000 years ago to rescue you!

Sky watch for the next month

Venus will be at its optimum brightness on Friday, Dec. 6. You will be able to see Venus in broad daylight if you look careful enough, but for sure it will be one of the brightest objects besides the moon before setting after 8 p.m. in the southwest.

Watch out for a Christmas morning planet bonanza. Just before sunrise on Dec. 25, see Saturn in the south-southeast, Mars in the south-southwest next to the moon and Jupiter in the northwest-west. You might want to use binoculars but all of these are visible to the naked eye.

We have two mild meteor showers this month. Geminid peaks Friday, Dec. 13 just after midnight on a bright, waxing, gibbous moon that'll interfere with the Geminids throughout most of the peak night. The Ursid meteor shower takes place Saturday, Dec. 22 after sundown when Earth moves through the centre of the dust trail left behind by the comet until the moon comes out at 10 p.m. For more on all meteor showers check out the International Meteor Organization at www.imo.net/calendar/2013.

The winter solstice arrives Thursday, Dec. 21. It is officially the shortest day of the year. This occurs when the sun reaches its most southerly declination of -23.5 degrees and likewise the North Pole is tilted 23.5 degrees away from the sun. Depending on the Gregorian calendar, the December

solstice occurs annually on a day between Dec. 20-23. On this date, all places above a latitude of 66.5 degrees north are now in darkness, while locations below a latitude of 66.5 degrees south receive 24 hours of daylight.

Public events for the next month

The monthly public stargazing at the Tourism and Trek Station takes place Friday, Dec. 13 starting at 7:30 p.m. It's the last session for the year, so check us out if you haven't. A short indoor presentation on "Christmas in the sky" will be followed by stargazing through the 11-inch telescope. Treats and refreshments are provided free of charge and everyone is welcome. Experts are on hand every second Friday of the month at 7:30 p.m. to explain the heavens, teach scoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky. For more information, contact the Trek Station at 403-485-2994 or visit the website www.vulcanatourism.com.

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