Numbers*

Numbers 1:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of the congregation, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,

*As you read the book of Numbers, you will discover the writer switches back and forth from the narrative to God's rules for His people. As new situations arose in Israel's experience, God gave them His direction and expanded His law. Beginning in chapter 1 the book of Numbers grabs our attention as the book starts with these words, "**And the Lord spake**." This quote should stimulate one's mind, becoming curious and inquisitive of the Lord's words. What's coming next? What is the Lord going to say? How do the Israelites react? Like Leviticus, the book of Numbers includes many actual statements of God, recorded by Moses after God spoke to him in the tabernacle. The statement-"**the LORD spake**"-is found at least fifty five times in the book of Numbers.*

If you think Numbers has something to do with math--don't panic. There are no math problems at the end to solve. This fourth book of the Pentateuch gets its name from the two "numberings" of the children of Israel. The first census was taken soon after the escape from Egypt and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, as seen in chapters 1-4. The second occurred as they were nearing the end of the forty-year sojourn in the wilderness and the new generation was preparing to enter the promised land.

Chapters 5-25 recounts a number of experiences of the Israelites in their wilderness wanderings, along with additional instructions given by God through Moses during that time. This section ends with their encounters with the false prophet Balaam, recorded in Numbers chapters 22-25. Turn with me to;

Numbers 25:1-3 (1) And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of

Moab.
(2) And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.
(3) And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.
Near the end of the forty years of wandering, the Israelites camped on the plains of Moab on the east side of the Jordan River. The king of Moab hired a pagan prophet named Balaam to put a curse on Israel. When Balaam tried to curse Israel, God moved him to bless Israel instead. Israel committed sin when they accepted Moabite invitations to worship Baal, a false god. The temptation to worship Baalpeor involved sexual immorality that caused some in Israel to commit adultery and sacrifice to an idol. Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD (Numbers 31:16).
The lesson for Christians in this matter would be, avoid false worship which is spiritual adultery.
After the second census, the last ten chapters of Numbers, 27–36, gives further instructions concerning offerings and feast days, as well as other events occurring as Israel was getting ready to invade Canaan.
In the first chapter the method of numbering the children of Israel is given, but the tribe of Levi is not included in the numbering nor mentioned in the tribal list. The numbering of the tribes of Israel is in Numbers 1:2-15. The tribe of Levi is not included in this numbering of Israel that are able to go to war, why not? Because the tribe of Levi was to bear all the duties connected to and concerning the Tabernacle, turn with me to;
Numbers 1:47-50 (47) But the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them.
(48) For the LORD had spoken unto Moses, saying,
(49) Only thou shalt not number the tribe of Levi, neither take

the sum of them among the children of Israel:
(50) But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.
There are people who like to say the scriptures contradict, but this is not so. These are people who are either unwilling or unable to retain the scriptures within the confines they are presented. Take the twelve tribes of Israel for an example. Is Levi a tribe or not? If there is contradiction, it exist only in ones own folly. One only need to apply sensible reasoning and apply the mind toward the acquisition of wisdom and knowledge, by reading, investigation and reflection upon the word of God. One only need to follow the instructions for study revealed in;
2Timothy 2:15-16 (15) Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.
(16) But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.
Numbers records one of the worst spiritual disasters to ever come upon God's people. A whole generation died without seeing the fulfillment of God's promise except for two men, what were they thinking? Perhaps they listened to profane and vain babblings instead of God, turn with me to;
Numbers 32:10-13 (10) And the LORD'S anger was kindled the same time, and he sware, saying,
(11) Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me:
(12) Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.
(13) And the LORD'S anger was kindled against Israel, and he

made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation, that had done evil in the sight of the LORD, was consumed.
The people evidently believed they could do as they pleased and still enter the promised land, so God let them wander about until they all died. The new testament tells us why we should be concerned in;
Matthew 13:41-42 (41) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
(42) And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
These examples of God's people and His judgment against them will not uphold the doctrine, "once in grace, always in grace." That doctrine is a miss-interpretation of scripture. It is a way that seemeth right but leadeth unto death. Furthermore I have been unable to find one scripture that confirms "once in grace, always in grace." However I do find new testament scripture that confirms "falling from grace", but strangely many reject what is says, are you listening?; Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace (Gal 5:4). *Israel had fallen from grace and they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until they were consumed and not allowed to enter into the promised land. Even today there are people who entertain misconceptions of interpretation. I want to share a duzey with you. It's an example of nonsensical mindsets some people have. Here is the* ***Quote****:* The bible is a mixture of fiction (parables), fact (historical dates and places), and a lot of interpretation and mis-interpretation. And a whole lot of anecdotes. Anyone that takes it at face value needs mental help. ***Unquote:*** *Do you admit to needing mental help spiritually? If you do, you are in the right place brothers and sisters. Listen; Noah needed mental help and look what it got him and his family, life, during the worst storm in history*

*while eradicating all others. I believe what Jesus said "*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*." The Israelite's conceded their need of mental help by taking the advice of the majority of spies that spied out the land, and look what it got them, they wondered in the desert for forty years until they all died except for the two spies that needed mental help. A Christian will not put their blessing in jeopardy because they need mental help from God! Quite the contrary, faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So! My faith concerning the quote we read is this, anyone who does not take the Bible at face value, squanders their need for God's help and they are going to need a fire extinguisher following judgment, but will be unable to find one. Mental help from God anyone?, then turn with me to;*
Revelation 20:10-15 (10) And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.
(11) And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.
(12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.
(13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.
(14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.
(15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.
Nonbelievers should reconsider their folly and admit their need of God's mental help. However, not everything is gloom

and doom in Numbers. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the most interesting man to ever set foot upon the earth. Turn with me in wonder;
Numbers 24:15-19 (15) And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said:
(16) He hath said, which heard the words of God, and knew the knowledge of the most High, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open:
(17) I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a **Star out of Jacob**, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth.
(18) And Edom shall be a possession, Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly.
(19) Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.
Though God had used Balaam to utter correct prophecy, yet Balaam had for, filthy lucure's sake, instigated Israel's shameful sin of adultery and false worship. For this he perished along with 24,000 Israelites whom were guilty of the transgression. I fear today, that, for filthy lucure's sake (Titus 1:11), many preachers are leading people into spiritual adultery and false worship. However, Balaam's prophecies were a remarkable prediction of Israel's influential place in history, a Star to arise out of Jacob. Who would ever think that such a prophecy that is the very fabric of Christianity would originate in the book of Numbers. Never-the-less, listen very carefully to the appearance of this star, turn to;
Matthew 2:1-10 (1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
(2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
(3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was

troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
(4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
(5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
(6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
(7) Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
(8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
(9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
(10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
{Just who were these "wise men" and why were they the only ones who realized the importance of the star? None of the political or religious leaders of the Jews seemed aware of it until these men from a distant country suddenly showed up in Jerusalem.
At the time of God's great deliverance of the Jews in Persia during the days of Queen Esther, it was recorded that "many of the people of the land became Jews" (Esther 8:17). This event in itself would constrain many of the Persian members of the Magi at that time to study the Jewish sacred books, especially the Messianic prophecies of Daniel. This lore would have become a key part of the Magi's traditional learning, handed down generation after generation, even to the time of Christ. Among these Danielic prophecies, of course, given during the reign of Darius the Mede, was the great prophecy of the "seventy weeks," which revealed that the Messiah would come

as Prince of Israel 483 years after the Persian emperor gave the commandment to the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24,25). It would easily be possible for the Persian Magi, as the promised date came near, to put these prophecies of Balaam and Daniel together, and thus be watching for "His star" to appear. (When They Saw the Star by Henry M. Morris)**}**
{Persia, historic region of southwestern Asia associated with the area that is now modern Iran. The term Persia was used for centuries and originated from a region of southern Iran formerly known as Persis. The use of the name was gradually extended by the ancient Greeks and other peoples to apply to the whole Iranian plateau. The people of that region have traditionally called their country Iran, “Land of the Aryans.” That name was officially adopted in 1935. (Britannica.com)**}**
I just want to mention here that Persia changed it’s name to Iran at the suggestion of the Nazi government of Adolf Hilter. It does seem strange the Magi of Persia were the ones to detect 'His star' and thus became agents on earth ushering in the Messiah and His Church, something that is in complete opposition to current leadership in Iran who intend annihilation of everything connected to the Christian banner. In the last book of the new testament there are warnings of tribulations that follow the birth, and or the life, and or the death and or the resurrection of the Star of Judah. Too many tribulations to consider in one setting, never-the-less turn to;
Revelation 12:1-5 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
(2) And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
(3) And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
(4) And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the

woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
(5) And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
The Hebrew nation, nurtured of God through long centuries for the purpose of bringing Christ into the world, is here personified as a Queen, in heavenly glory giving birth to the Child of the ages. The Child was Christ, the Messiah, the Star of Judah. Satan was waiting to devour Him at birth. This must be a reference to Herod's effort to kill Christ as a baby. If satan could have succeeded, he may thus have thwarted Christ's redemptive work. Satan did however, through Judas, succeed in having Jesus as a grown man put to death. But that boomeranged against Satan; for it supplied believers with the one weapon against which satan is powerless, the 'Blood of the Lamb.' And when believers obey the Christ in baptism, they are covered with the 'Blood of the Lamb", thus satan has no more power over them.
December 25th has become a time of great expectation for peoples around the world. However the expectation is more pagan than spiritual, as the gifts people are expecting are of the world and not of the spirit. Now there is nothing wrong with families and friends coming together on the day called Christmas to enjoy one another in conversation, gift giving and mealtime, however I would caution against allowing such a time becoming a time of idol worship. The birth of Christ was the most important birth in the world for the salvation of man, whom was called the 'Star of Judah' in the book of Numbers. The story of Jesus is popular at what we call Christmas. Christ was not born to usher in a holiday. His purpose was much more important than the establishment of a commercial holiday. Christ is the author of eternal salvation and He received His power and authorship from God the Father almighty, The great I AM! Listen; And he said unto them,

Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power (Mark 9:1).
Herein is wisdom, God is all powerful and could have chosen any age to send the kingdom in power, but having selected and announced it would appear during the lifetime of those then living, the people have no choice but to gladly accept the Kingdom that it exist, or reject the Kingdom denying it exist. Are you listening? Turn with me to;
Colossians 1:12-14 (12) Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
(13) Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:
(14) In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:
Remember in the opening statement we learned a census was taken soon after the escape from Egypt and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, well, the Lord is not finished with His count, He is not willing that any should perish but come to repentance. However one must have faith in Christ that is the effect of belief, and obey the ordinance of baptism which is the effect of faith; only those who have first believe the testimony of God, by faith repent of their sins, confess Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and are baptized for remission of sins will be translated into the Kingdom of His dear Son. This is the gospel. It's invitation is always open, as is prayer requests for other reasons, in either case come while we persuade with song.

This message approved by
Jack Warford
a minister for Christ

When They Saw the Star by Henry M. Morris, Ph.D.

"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matthew 2:11).

Each year, as Christmas approaches, articles appear in numerous publications, both secular and religious, "explaining" the famous star whose unspoken testimony led the wise men to Bethlehem when Christ was born. Many theories have been offered, by many learned men, seeking to account for this remarkable event recorded in Matthew 2:1_12. Although a small booklet such as this cannot really do justice to all these studies, it may be helpful to give a summary evaluation of them from the viewpoint of Biblical literalism, assuming "star" means "star."

But before considering the nature of the star itself, there are at least two intriguing questions about this remarkable event that are rarely discussed, even at Christmastime, but which do bear upon its true significance.

1. Just who were these "wise men" and why were they the only ones who realized the importance of the star? None of the political or religious leaders of the Jews seemed aware of it until these men from a distant country suddenly showed up in Jerusalem.
2. Why did the appearance of these three (?) travelers, with their question, inspire such agitation among King Herod and these Jewish leaders? When the wise men saw the star over Bethlehem, they were excited and joyful. Why did not Herod and the Jewish leaders rejoice with them?
3. Finally, just what was this star, and how could it possibly lead them on such a long journey to just the right location, especially since every one else in the very city of the promised Messiah seemed unaware of it?

Let's take a brief look at possible answers to these fascinating questions.

Who Were the Wise Men and How Did They Know?

The common legend about the wise men says that there were three of them, named Melchior, Balthasar, and Gaspar, from three different nations (Babylonia, Persia, and India). One early writer called them three kings.

However, all this is traditional, with no basis in Scripture. The phrase "wise men," in Matthew 2:1,7, is Magi (or Magoi) in the Greek original, and applies to members of a special group of men. A class of scholars called the Magi (from which our modern word "magic" is derived) may originally have come from a certain tribe in Media, and may even have later become a part of the governing body of Persia. This is uncertain, but what does appear to be well established is the fact that they were especially interested in astronomy and the prophetic "wisdom" that this talent seemed to give them.

They eventually became a sort of priestly caste, and were attached to the royal courts of Babylonia and Persia and even those of more distant lands such as Arabia and India, as consultants and advisers to the nobles of those lands.

There is even an ancient tradition that Balaam, the notorious prophet from Mesopotamia, was an early member of the Magi, perhaps even their founder. If so, this fact would at least partially explain why the Magi at the time of Christ were aware that a special star would be used by God to announce the Savior's birth to this world. It was Balaam's prophecy, of course, as recorded in the Bible, that spoke of this future star. Here is his prophecy, actually constrained by God to be uttered against the prophet's own will.

I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth, and Edom shall be a possession. Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall do valiantly. Out of Jacob shall come He that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city (Numbers 24:17_19).

Thus Balaam's reluctant, but divinely inspired, prophecy, revealed that a unique Star associated with Israel would accompany a future Sceptre (that is, King) who would eventually rule the

world.
The later Magi, especially those in Babylon and Persia (where the influence of Daniel, as well as Mordecai and Esther) had been profound and long-lasting, would surely be familiar with this prophecy and also the various prophecies of Daniel (who had been the most respected of the "wise men" at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus?note Daniel 2:45; 6:28).
Some of the Magi may even have been Jews in religion, if not in ethnicity. At the time of God's great deliverance of the Jews in Persia during the days of Queen Esther, it was recorded that "many of the people of the land became Jews" (Esther 8:17). This event in itself would constrain many of the Persian members of the Magi at that time to study the Jewish sacred books, especially the Messianic prophecies of Daniel. This lore would have become a key part of the Magi's traditional learning, handed down generation after generation, even to the time of Christ.
Among these Danielic prophecies, of course, given during the reign of Darius the Mede, was the great prophecy of the "seventy weeks," which revealed that the Messiah would come as Prince of Israel 483 years after the Persian emperor gave the commandment to the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24,25). It would easily be possible for the Persian Magi, as the promised date came near, to put these prophecies of Balaam and Daniel together, and thus be watching for "His star" to appear.
Something like this may at least partly explain why the Persian Magi?and not the Herodians and the rationalistic Sadducees (who comprised most of the Jewish religious leaders of the time) were aware of the significance of the star when it appeared. It is quite possible also that the "wise men" from this same caste who were prominent as counsellors in Babylon and other lands (even Arabia and India) were also aware of what was happening. It may be possible (as the tradition suggests) that Magi from other lands as well as Persia joined the entourage journeying to Jerusalem to seek this promised "King of the Jews." There is no convincing reason to think that only three Magi came. The fact that three types of gifts (gold, frankincense, myrrh) were offered does not mean that only three men offered the gifts. The Bible does not say how many there were, but there may well have been many more than three.
Why Were Herod and the Jews so Troubled by the Magi's Visit?
It would, indeed, seem rather unlikely that the visit of three itinerant "astrologers" would create such a stir in Jerusalem. In the first place, how could these foreigners ever get in to see King Herod? Why would their question cause the king to be "troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Matthew 2:3).
But all this becomes clear when it is realized that the visitors probably consisted of much more than three foreign "astrologers" (as a number of modern translations call the "wise men"). There were very likely more than three Magi in the group, probably a dozen or more. They had come from "the east," and were themselves representatives of one or more great nations, traveling no doubt with a military escort and a sizable entourage of servants.
Even so, why should this upset a powerful king acting under authority of the great Roman empire, supposedly dominant in all the known world of that time. Herod had been appointed "King of the Jews," by no less then the great Caesar Augustus himself, so why should he be troubled by these dignitaries from the east?
The fact is, however, that the Roman empire was not dominant in all the known world. In fact, the various nations "east" of Judaea?Persia, Babylonia, Assyria, etc.?were not part of the Roman empire at all, but rather part of the large and powerful Parthian empire, which was a serious rival to Rome and had defeated several attempts by the Roman legions (including one led by Herod himself, before he became king) to subjugate her. There is reason to believe that, at this time, the Parthians (i.e., Persians) were actually threatening Rome along the nearby boundaries of the Roman empire.
Herod had been appointed "King of the Jews" as his official title by Rome, but here was a delegation from a powerful enemy empire demanding information about someone "born King of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2). No wonder Herod was troubled. Furthermore, the entourage was not traveling on camels (as the Christmas cards tend to picture them) but on strong horses (for that

was how Persian nobles travelled), and they were quite confident that this coming King was already in the land and that His presence had been announced by God Himself through a star in the heavens.

The rest of Jerusalem was also "troubled" by what seemed an imminent threat of invasion. The religious leaders were undoubtedly embarrassed, as well as troubled, that they, of all people, had to be informed by foreigners about the coming of Messiah.

Although these Jewish religious leaders were not looking for the Messiah, and did not really want Him to come and upset their own profitable operations, they did at least know about the messianic prophecies. King Herod, who was a descendant of Edomites, did not know the prophecies himself, but when he inquired of the chief priests and scribes, they were able to tell him where this coming King Messiah was to be born. Paraphrasing Micah 5:2, they said: "Thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Matthew 2:5,6).

Whether these Jewish leaders were familiar with Balaam's prophecy of the Star or not, the account does not say. In any case, they had not paid any heed to the actual Star when it appeared, though they must have seen it.

Just What Was This Remarkable Star?

If we really seek to take the Bible literally, we need to think of this star as a real star, not an angel or some miraculous atmospheric light which the wise men thought was a star. The Greek word, aster, occurs some 24 times in the New Testament. A similar word, astron, is used four times. Both words refer specifically to real stars, unless the context indicates otherwise.

It is true that stars are sometimes used to symbolize angels (e.g., Revelation 1:20; 12:4,7) or even human beings (Jude 13). It is also true that planets, meteorites, and comets were apparently considered "stars" by the astronomers of that day and even by the Lord Jesus Himself (e.g., Matthew 24:29). But such usages are always apparent in the context.

The account of the wise men, however, is given as a simple historical record, and the Magi certainly knew what a star was as well as anybody in that day, and they called it a star (in fact, His star), not an angel or an atmospheric guiding light of some kind. They were familiar with the record of the glory cloud (the Shekinah) that had guided the Israelites under Moses in the wilderness (e.g., Numbers 14:14), for it was in the same book of the Torah as the account of Balaam's star. Yet they called it a star, not a glory cloud or any other kind of moving light in the sky.

Nevertheless, many fine Bible teachers, unable to see how a fixed star in the heavens (or even a moving star like a planet or comet) could actually guide the Magi to the very house in Bethlehem where the infant Christ was staying, have decided it must have been an angel or the Shekinah or some other miraculous moving light, seen only by these foreign wise men.

But the idea that the "star" was not really a star involves serious difficulties, in addition to that posed by the straightforward use of "star" in the narrative.

Why, for example, would God send such a special aerial messenger 600 miles away to Persia, and not to those in Israel itself who were anticipating the coming Messiah? The Jewish leaders were not watching for Him, of course, but there were many who were. God did send a choir of angels and "the glory of the Lord" to a group of shepherds near the manger in Bethlehem to announce the birth (Luke 2:9_12), but what about the faithful remnant in Jerusalem and other parts of Israel? The account refers to "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38) and mentions Simeon and Anna in particular. These two, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, even recognized the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah when Mary and Joseph, after the forty "days of her purification according to the law of Moses [see Leviticus 12:2_6] brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord" (Luke 2:22). Why had such devout Jews, waiting for the Messiah, not been informed about His birth in Bethlehem?

Furthermore, how would the Magi, far off in Persia, recognize this supposed moving light as announcing the King of the Jews, impelling them to undertake a long and dangerous journey to greet Him? And why would the light not have led them directly to Bethlehem instead of

Jerusalem and Herod's court?

As a matter of fact, Matthew's account never says the Star (or moving light, if that's what it was) ever "led" them at all. It says merely that they saw the Star twice?once while they were at home "in the east," then later, as it "stood over where the young child was" (Matthew 2:2,9). There is no record that they saw it at all during the long journey to Jerusalem.

The guiding light hypothesis appeals to many evangelicals, since they are usually willing to accept the local miracles of Scripture (such as Christ's turning water into wine, or even the restoration of Lazarus' dead body four days after he died). Miracles that require God's intervention in the entire world, however, such as the global flood in the days of Noah, or the long day of Joshua, are not so readily believed, even by many evangelicals, and they often seek materialistic explanations for them, if possible.

For example, a very popular explanation offered for the star by many is that the "star" was merely a conjunction of two or three planets at the time of Christ's birth. The great astronomer, Johann Kepler, was apparently the first to suggest this type of explanation. In 1605 he calculated that there had been a conjunction of three planets (Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars) in 7 B.C. Many others have followed this idea, assuming that this conjunction constituted the Christmas star. It was said to have occurred in the constellation Pisces at that time, and this constellation was believed by astrologers to be the Zodiacal sign related to Israel.

Others have said that a conjunction of Jupiter, Venus, and the star Regulus in 3 B.C. was the Christmas star. All such conjunction theories, however, face several serious difficulties. It seems incredible that the Magi, as versed in astronomy as they were, would call such a group of stars "His" Star! No two of these stars were ever so close together as to look like a single star?never even appearing to touch each other! Furthermore, all such planetary conjunctions occur with some significant frequency, which could have been calculated easily enough by these experienced astronomers from the known orbits of the planets, so why would any one, or several, such conjunctions be associated as a special "sign" with the promised King of Israel? There was certainly nothing miraculous about them.

Still more importantly, this sort of thing?associating star and planetary and Zodiacal positions with events on Earth?is a prominent feature of the occult art of astrology, and astrology is condemned in the Bible (Isaiah 47:13_15; etc.). It would not seem reasonable for God to associate anything concerning His promised incarnation with the pseudo-science of astrology which He had warned His people to avoid.

Similar objections apply to the suggestion of some writers, both ancient and modern, that the Christmas star was a comet. Comets also are fairly frequent and travel in regular, predictable orbits, just like planets and their conjunctions. They also have a different appearance than or dinary stars or planets, with a sort of tail following each of them, and the Magi undoubtedly could distinguish them from real stars. They were also commonly used as astrological predictors whenever they occurred, and would thus seem unsuitable for God's purpose in sending His Star.

There does remain one special type of star which does not involve any of the difficulties discussed above. These are the novas (formerly called "new stars") or, still more intriguingly, the rare supernovas. These are real stars, not conjunctions of stars, or comets, and certainly not atmospheric phenomena.

Was His Star a Real Star after All?

Novas and supernovas are sudden, rare, entirely unpredictable explosions of existing stars that had been originally created on Day Four of Creation Week. Somehow what seems to be an ordinary star suddenly increases tremendously in brilliance, continuing so for several months until it finally fades away.

Since supernovas are very rare and entirely unpredictable, they have no astrological significance. There have only been a few visible supernovas reported in our galaxy, the oldest of which occurred in 1054 A.D., as reported by Chinese astronomers. There was one reported by Tycho Brahe in 1572 A.D., and one by Kepler in 1604 A.D. Others have been seen with the aid of large telescopes, but these were not available to the Magi, of course.

Although we have no firm official astronomical record of a visible supernova occurring at the time of Christ's birth, such a stellar phenomenon would surely be appropriate to announce the birth of Christ. There surely must have been a few supernovas before 1054 A.D., and the fact that no records of these have been preserved is merely an argument from silence. A great Christian astronomer, E. W. Maunder, for fifty years Superintendent of the Solar Department of the Royal Greenwich Observatory, and president of the British Astronomical Observatory, came to the conclusion that such a star (called, in his day, a "new star" or "temporary star") was the only logical explanation for the Star of Bethlehem. He devoted a strong chapter to this subject in his book, Astronomy and the Bible, published in 1908,

As a matter of fact, there may well be certain other hazy records of such a star. In the Bible, the only mention of the star is in Matthew 2:1_12. However, a number of the early Christian writers were fascinated with the account, and apparently did some contemporary research of their own in extra-Biblical sources.

For example, Ignatius, who was the apostolic father closest in time to the New Testament writers (died 107 A.D.) wrote of the star as follows: "(It was) a star which so shone in heaven beyond all the stars, its newness caused excitement." The pseudepigraphical writing known as The Protoevangelium of James quotes the wise men as saying to Herod: "We saw how an indescribably great star shone among these stars and dimmed them so that they no longer shone, and so we knew that a King was born for Israel."

Eusebius, a scholarly church historian of the early fourth century, evidently made a considerable study of the literature available from the centuries before him, and came to this conclusion about the star. "The star was new and a stranger among the usual lights of heaven, a strange star besides the usual ones, a strange and unusual star, not one of the many known stars, but being new and fresh."

A recent writer, Robert McIver, has spent three decades researching this subject. In his book, Star of Bethlehem-Star of Messiah, published 1998, he cites star records from ancient Chinese and Korean astronomers who both noted such an unusual new star about the time of Christ's birth. He also discusses paintings in the Roman catacombs, as well as coins from various countries which depict an unusual star about this time. He even notes possible sightings of the star in the Americas. Much of his evidence is vulnerable to other possible interpretations, but it is at least an interesting coincidence, if nothing else, that such indications of an unusual new star at about the time of Christ's birth can be found all over the world.

In any case, although it is not possible to be dogmatic, it does seem that the most feasible explanation for the Christmas star is that it was a real star, rather than either a conjunction of two or more stars or a special moving light of some kind in the lower atmosphere. After all the Magi called it a star, and they would surely know the difference. The Persian Magi in particular were very competent observational astronomers, not astrologists. If they were not Jews or Jewish proselytes (either of which is a good possibility), they were Zoroastrians, and the Zorastrian religion was similar to Judaism in many respects, among which was an aversion to astrology.

They were almost certainly acquainted with the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, especially Balaam's prophecy of a new Star which would signal the rising of a great King in Israel. Balaam himself was probably a member of the Magi, possibly even the founder of their caste. Zoroaster also was probably one of the earlier Magi, between the times of Balaam and Christ.

Thus it is significant that both Balaam's divinely inspired prophecy and Matthew's divinely inspired history recognized it as a star?in fact as "His" Star! Unless God created a brand new star at this time, which is possible, of course, the most realistic explanation is that it was either a nova, or (more probably) a supernova?a gigantic explosion of an existing, but previously unknown, star.

As noted before, this was the conclusion of the late British astronomer, E. W. Maunder. He simply called it a "new star," the terms nova and supernova not yet having come into use in his day. In a more recent scientific article, "The Star of Bethlehem," published in Science Digest in

December 1976, James Mullaney says: "The considered opinion of nearly all who have studied the question is that a nova or supernova seems the most likely explanation for the Christmas star of all those put forth to date" (p.65).

Mullaney also makes the cogent observation: "Truly, here is a celestial announcement card above all others worthy the birth of a king" (ibid.). A supernova explosion radiates more energy into space at its peak than all the stars in our own galaxy combined! The entrance of the Creator into His creation as a man among men would surely warrant the most majestic announcement possible by His creation. An angelic host announced it at the scene?a mighty star to the rest of the world!

The mechanistic details of what causes such a stellar explosion and its after-effects are still rather obscure scientifically, and their occurrences are altogether unpredictable as to time and place. How, then, did Balaam know that one would occur at the time of Messiah's birth, some 1400 years in the future?

The information came from God, that's how! While it is true that "new" stars, as well as comets and meteors and planetary conjunctions, have often in the past been taken as astrologically associated with the rise or fall of great men, it is also true that no astrologer or anyone else has ever predicted such an event hundreds of years before it happened.

Having created the stars, God is well able to set off an explosion in one of them whenever He chooses, and also to inform one of His prophets about it as far in advance as He chooses. There is really no better explanation of Balaam's remarkable prophecy (even given against the prophet's own will!) and the miraculous birth of Christ which eventually, in God's own time, fulfilled it.

But just how did the Magi know that this star, this supernova (assuming that's what it was) was His Star, the one prophesied so long ago by Balaam. After all, there had also probably been other "new stars" from time to time. This was surely not the first.

Or was it? There are records of earlier comets and earlier conjunctions, and these had indeed been considered to be astrological portents of one kind or another, but there have never yet been found any firm records of earlier novas. In fact, the Biblical chronology assures us (evolutionary astronomers to the contrary notwithstanding) that the stars were created only a few thousand years ago, and in general should not be subject to such an explosive disintegration process so soon, or so we would suggest.

That is, unless God Himself triggered it! There have been many other novas since that time, of course, and also a few supernovas, but perhaps God has allowed these just to show us that such things are possible. They do at least reinforce and support His revealed truth that His creation was completed in the past (Genesis 2:1_3). It is being conserved quantitatively, but decaying qualitatively, in the present, by the entropy principle (compare Psalm 102:25_27). This had been established by God's primeval curse on all man's dominion because of sin (Genesis 3:17_20; Romans 8:20_22; etc.), and will continue until Christ returns to renew His creation in the ages to come.

In any case, there were ways in which the Magi (as well as others, if they had been watching for it) could identify this new star as Balaam's prophesied star. As noted earlier, they could well have known from Daniel's seventy-weeks prophecy, as well as others, that the time of His coming was near, so they were watching for the star in their regular astronomical observations.

There is also the very realistic possibility that this new star occurred in one of the constellations which had been associated with God's primeval promise of the coming Savior. This "protevangel" (that is, "first Gospel") prophesied the age-long conflict between the Serpent (that is, Satan) and the Seed of the Woman (that is, Christ). The Serpent would inflict a serious bruise on the woman's seed, but eventually Christ will destroy Satan forever (Genesis 3:15). This primeval promise is reflected in many of the star-pictures of the constellations, especially the twelve signs of the Zodiac and their decans (or related constellations). While these star messages have been badly corrupted by astrology, they do predate any astrological meanings later imposed on them. In fact, the Scriptures themselves imply that these pictures and their primeval meanings were established originally by God Himself, through the ancient patriarchs

(Seth in particular, according to the Jewish historian Josephus).
In the Genesis record of God's creation of the stars, they were said to be for "signs," as well as for "seasons, days, and years," (Genesis 1:14). Then, according to God's message to Job, it was only God who could "bring forth Mazzaroth in his season" (Job 38:32), where Mazzaroth refers specifically to the twelve signs of the Zodiac?that is, the constellations which have been designated as representing the Virgin, the Balances, the Fishes, the Lion, etc.
Certain individual constellations are even mentioned by name as having been formed by God?that is, "Arcturus, Orion, the Pleiades" (Job 9:8), the "crooked serpent" (Job 26:13), and others. God is also said to have named the stars (Psalm 147:4; Isaiah 40:26). Such Scriptures indicate God had a purpose in identifying these stars and constellations and that purpose certainly was not to serve astrology. The most reasonable inference is that He wanted to imprint His purposes and promises on the very heavens themselves, so they could be seen in all times and nations, especially before His written Word would become available. Thus "the heavens declare the glory of God "and have been uttering speech and showing knowledge day and night throughout the world" (Psalm 19:1,2), ever since the beginning.
A number of these ancient constellations, despite millennia of astrological distortion, do still show clear reflections of God's primeval promise. The great Christian astronomer E. W. Maunder noted this, as have various other scientists and theologians through the years. For example, the sign of the Virgin suggests the promise of a virgin-born Savior, as implied in the very phrase "seed of the woman" (men, not women, generate "seed," so a miracle would be required for a woman to do so). The sign of Leo the Lion pictures a conquering lion slaying a fleeing serpent. Similar related messages can be deduced from many of the other signs.
It is difficult at this late date to pinpoint the specific constellation in which the star appeared. The date of Christ's birth is uncertain and so is the date of the star. But it does seem reasonable to assume that it appeared in a constellation which the Magi knew was depicting the coming of the promised Redeemer.
These were devout men, believing in the true God of creation and the promises in His Word. They were undoubtedly familiar also with the original signs and symbols God had imposed on the stars, and thus were able to recognize that this new star that had suddenly blazed forth in the sky must indeed be "His Star," the star announcing the birth of the promised King.
They were so elated that they decided to make the long pilgrimage to Jerusalem to find and worship Him. However, this could not be arranged overnight. Considerable time would be needed to assemble an entourage of servants and armed guards, supplies for the whole company, gifts for the holy child, and perhaps even arrangements for meeting up with Magi coming from other regions with the same purpose. But finally they were ready, and set out on the long journey.
What Does His Star Mean to us Today?
Supernovas may shine brilliantly for many months and possibly longer, but this is a disintegration process and they finally fade out of sight. Also, as the earth moves along in its orbit around the sun, the night sky changes. Stars that were seen at one time during the year will soon be lost in the daytime, hidden by the sun's brightness, later in the year. Presumably this was happening to the Magi's star, so they could no longer see it as they travelled. They did not need it to guide them, however, as they knew it had announced Israel's coming King, and they assumed He would be in Jerusalem by the time they arrived.
In the meantime, Mary and Joseph had travelled from their home in Nazareth in Galilee, to Judaea, in order to be counted in the Roman census at Bethlehem, the ancestral home of Joseph's family. While there in Bethlehem, the child Jesus was born.
Although announced both by the heavenly host in the air above Bethlehem and also by the new star, neither announcement made any particular stir in Jerusalem. The shepherds had spread the news around Bethlehem, and later Simeon and Anna around Jerusalem (Luke 2:17; 2:38), but only a few realized the real significance of the event. After all, there had been various other alleged Messiahs who had come and gone. Not even the star had seemed to arouse any Messianic interest, although surely many had seen it. The Jews as a whole were interested in

neither astronomy nor astrology. They apparently had little interest in Balaam's prophecy of the star, either, possibly because he was a Gentile who had been slain by the Israelites at the time of Moses.

When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, several months after they first saw the star (possibly even as long as two years after, in view of Herod's later slaughter of the children, according to Matthew 2:16), they apparently assumed that the newborn King would have been brought to Jerusalem by that time, or at least that Herod could tell them where to find Him. Instead, Herod and "all Jerusalem" were merely "troubled," widely fearful that the Parthians and Persians might attempt to install this new King on the throne of Judaea. When the scribes cited Micah 5:2 as evidence that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, Herod sent them there in search of Him.

Then, as they headed toward Bethlehem, six miles away, they suddenly saw the Star again. Even though they had not been able to see it while traveling to Jerusalem, it had indeed been going before them and now appeared once again, probably in the early morning sky.

The Biblical account says that the star "came and stood over where the young child was" (Matthew 2:9). That seems to indicate that, when the star reached its zenith position, it was over Bethlehem. Obviously, they didn't need the star to guide them to Bethlehem, but when they saw it again, they "rejoiced with exceeding great joy," because this meant that their understanding of Scripture was right and this was, indeed, His Star!

There is an ancient story, which could possibly be true, that as the Magi entered Bethlehem, they saw the star's reflection in the water at the bottom of a well, and that this was how they knew that the star was actually vertically over the village. The story has been cited by the Christian astronomer Maunder as realistic, even though unconfirmed. The Biblical account does not say that the star stood above the actual house, of course, but it would be easy enough to find out from the townspeople where the babe was, for the town was not large.

When they finally saw Him, they forthwith "fell down, and worshipped Him" (Matthew 2:11). And so should we!

‘Numbers’ Revised; 12172019
This message presented to; BaronOk-Jan2012/PineMtAr-March2018/ WestvilleOk-April2018/PleasentViewOk-April2018/