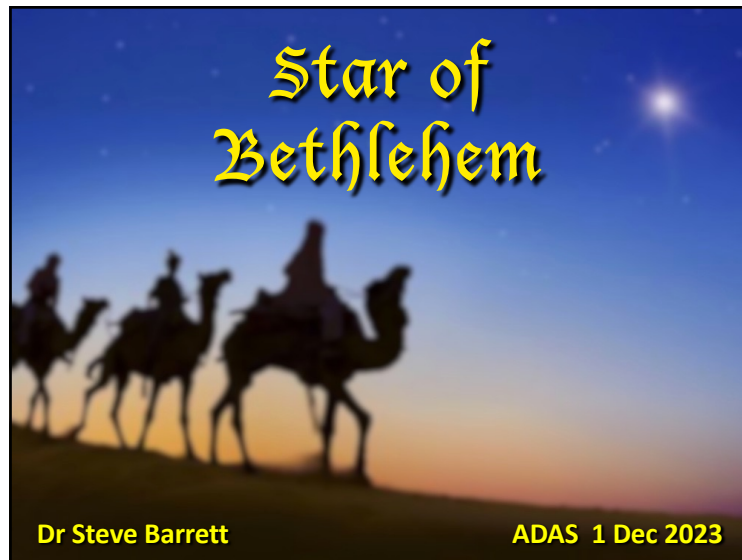


# Star of Bethlehem



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Summary

### Magi and the 'Star'

The principal elements of Matthew's account

- \* Magi journeyed to Jerusalem  
... prompted by a 'star in the east'  
(It does not say that they *followed* the star)
- \* Asked Herod about the 'King of the Jews'
- \* Herod was **unaware** of the star
- \* Magi journeyed to Bethlehem  
... where the star **re-appeared** in the south  
... and **stopped** over Bethlehem

### We Three Kings

We **three** kings of orient are  
... .. following yonder star

We **indeterminate number** of **men** of  
**unspecified geographic origin** are  
... **saw a star**

**N** wise men      where  $1 < N < \infty$

# Star of Bethlehem

## What is a 'Star'?

Bear in mind that a 'star' doesn't necessarily mean a star in the sense that we understand it.

"wandering star" = **Planet**

"hairy star" = **Comet**

"shooting star" = **Meteor**

A 'star' means something seen in the night sky.



## Any Clues?



Bloemaert 1624



## Astrological Significance

Every planet, every bright star and every zodiacal constellation had an astrological significance.

For instance ...

**Venus** beauty – fertility – birth

**Jupiter** royalty – king of planets

**Regulus** king of stars

**Leo** lion of Judea

Think of the sky as God's Facebook page.

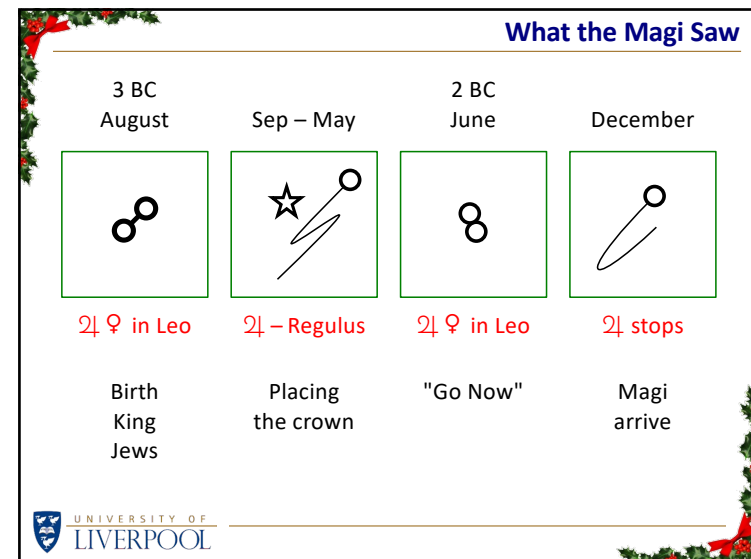
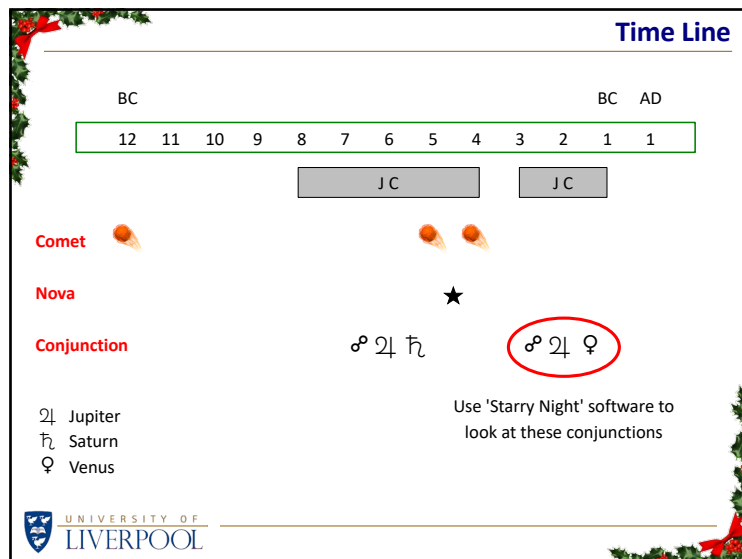
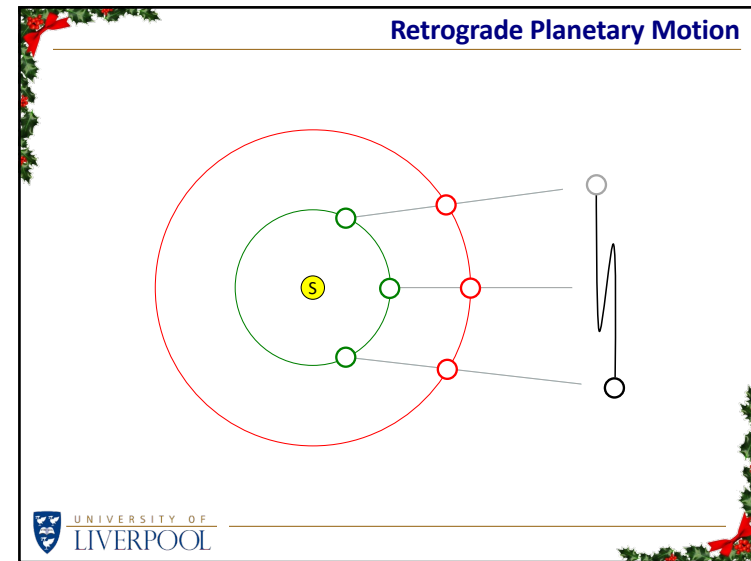
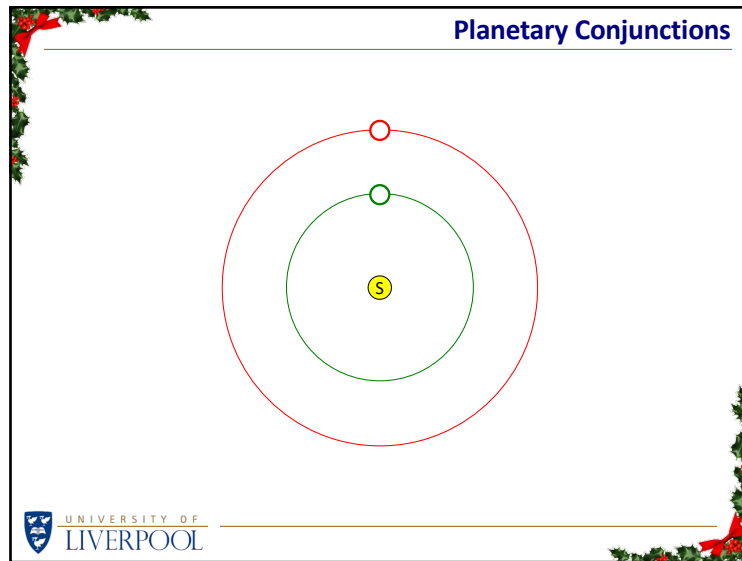


## 'Star' Candidates

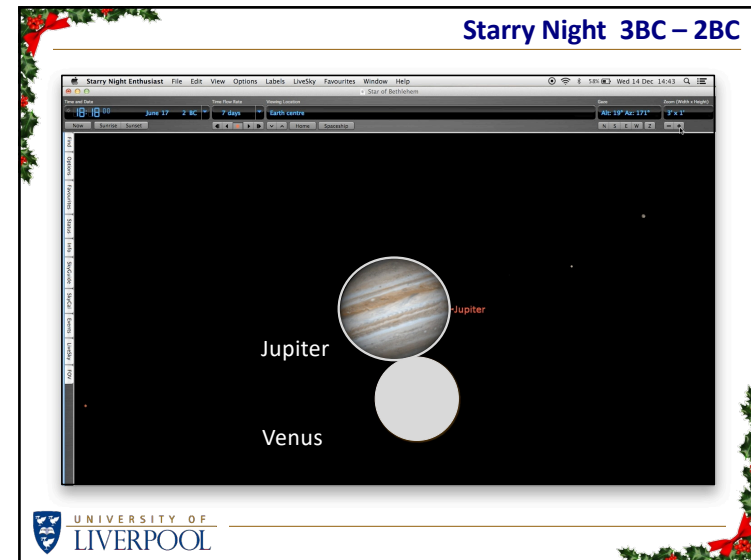
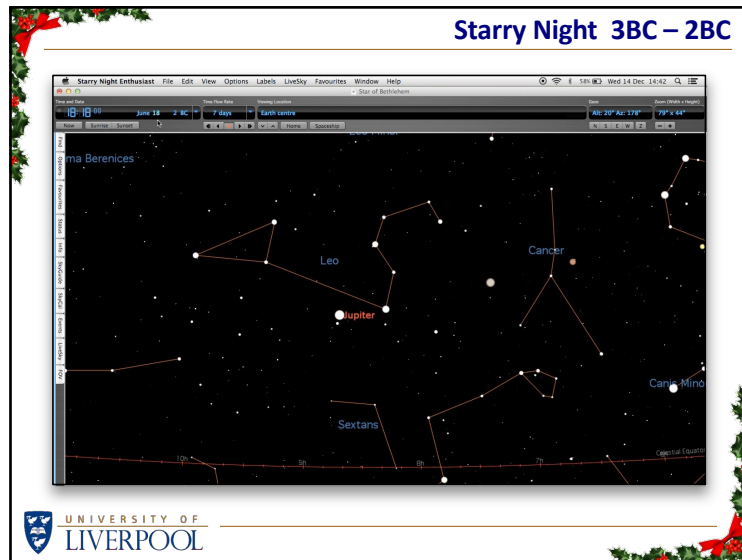
'Star'		Star in East	Significant	Herod wasn't aware	Star re-appeared in sky	Star stopped in sky
<b>Meteor</b>	///	?	X	✓	✓	X
<b>Comet</b>	☄	✓	✓	X	✓	X
<b>Nova</b>	★	✓	✓	?	?	X
<b>Supernova</b>	★	✓	✓	X	X	X
<b>Conjunction</b>	♂	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



# Star of Bethlehem



# Star of Bethlehem



Summary

Maybe it was these conjunctions that inspired the account in the Gospel of St Matthew.

Maybe it was a different astronomical event, or a combination of such events, that occurred within a few months.

Determining the astronomical facts is not difficult. Second-guessing the significance that the magi or other astrologers attributed to these events is a different matter.

Regardless, the underlying message is the same ...

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**Star of Bethlehem**

[www.liverpool.ac.uk/~sdb/Talks](http://www.liverpool.ac.uk/~sdb/Talks)

Dr Steve Barrett

ADAS 1 Dec 2023