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?  

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Star'</th>
<th>Star in East</th>
<th>Significant</th>
<th>Herod wasn't aware</th>
<th>Star re-appeared in sky</th>
<th>Star stopped in sky</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
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Think of the sky as God's Facebook page.
Star of Bethlehem

Planetary Conjunctions

Retrograde Planetary Motion

Time Line

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Comet

Nova

Conjunction

Use ‘Starry Night’ software to look at these conjunctions


Starry Night 3BC – 2BC

Dr Steve Barrett

Stourbridge U3A 5 Dec 2019
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 ...