

## The Season of Light

We now find ourselves in the season of Epiphany. Epiphany is one of the oldest seasons in the Christian Church year, second only to the Easter season. The season of light emphasises Jesus' manifestation as God and man (or epiphany, from the Greek *epiphaneia*). The earliest Christians called the feast of Epiphany the Theophany ("revelation of God"). When the Gentile wise men followed the star and came to worship Jesus, this showed that everyone now has access to God.

An astronomical phenomenon that happened early in the evening on December 21 gained worldwide attention in the media. The conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn - when the two planets appeared to be very close to each other from our earthly perspective, was labelled by some as a "rare Christmas star," and, due to its appearance a few days before Christmas, you can see why the idea got so much attention!

Jupiter and Saturn come into conjunction about every 20 years. The two previous conjunctions of these two was in 1980 and in 2000, but the latest one from a few weeks ago was the closest the two had appeared since the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

But does this have anything to do with Christmas or Christ's birth? No, it doesn't. Some have speculated that perhaps the actual Christmas star (the star that guided the wise men to Christ in Matthew 2:9) may have been a planetary conjunction (perhaps even a triple conjunction), but that idea really doesn't match with what Scripture teaches. We touched on this in a study pastor delivered to the women's guild in December. (If anyone would like a copy, please ask pastor).

For those saw the latest rare conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, they most likely were reminded of the supernatural star that guided the wise men over 2,000 years ago - after all, it took place only a few days before Christmas, and our response must be the same as the wise men: we should fall down and worship the King of kings and Lord of lords who has made the stars and the planets to display His glory (Psalm 19:1).

While we remember the wise men following the star to Bethlehem, we have the chance to speak and warn of something else that has quite a following today, regarding the stars. We are talking about horoscopes and astrology. The Second Commandment and Explanation from Luther's Small Catechism says, "You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain." What does this mean? We should fear and love God, so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie or deceive by His name, but call upon Him in every trouble, pray, praise and give thanks." What is using satanic arts by God's name? It means to try, by the use of God's name, to do supernatural things such as consulting witches and psychics, speaking to the dead, practicing astrology, and other satanic works. See Deuteronomy 18:9-14.

Ancient people worshipped gods in nature. They believed in the power of nature. God revealed Himself to His people as the God who created the things that others worshipped. Genesis 1:14-18 reads, "*Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night! Let them serve as signs to mark feasts, days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth!*" It was so. God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day and the smaller light to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good."

Christians will use creation as God intended. The stars and the planets give us light. They help us keep track of time. While the stars may help us find our directions, they do not control our lives. Those who sincerely practice astrology or look to horoscopes sin against the First and Second Commandments. We give thanks to God for a day when the sun turned black. It was the time when darkness ruled (Luke 22:53). God put His Son on a cross. God imputed to Jesus the sins of all people of all time. The Creator of heaven and earth died in payment of all sin. God, thereby, declared us to be forgiven, justified in His sight. By faith in Jesus, we are eternal. We know and believe that He guides our way. God directs our future (read Psalm 31:15 and Ecclesiastes 7:14) – not the stars.