

Commentary: Why tonight's 'Christmas Star' is such good news

December 21, 2020

Jupiter and Saturn will [cross paths](#) in the sky tonight and will appear to us as one body. They will seem closer than they have in nearly eight centuries and will shine brighter.

Since this is occurring on the winter solstice, the longest night of the year, the unusual light in the dark sky is especially welcome. And since it is happening so close to Christmas, many are calling this the "Christmas Star."

However, the star that led the Magi was not a natural occurrence. For instance, it was able to stop over a specific house in Bethlehem to show the Magi the location of the Christ child (Matthew 2:9). If a star came this close to us, it would incinerate our planet. The first Christmas Star was a miracle, just as the birth it signified was a miracle.

Nonetheless, the timing of tonight's celestial event points to that birth in an especially significant way. My wife and I were discussing this fact yesterday and she noted: "How wonderful, that God would give us such a sign of his presence in this year of all years."

She is exactly right.

The good news is especially good news

this year

Has there been a year in living memory when we needed the promise of Christmas more than this year?

Congressional leaders [announced](#) last night they secured a deal for a \$900 billion rescue package. However, a new mutation of the virus that “may be up to 70 percent more transmissible than the earlier strain” is [spreading](#) in the United Kingdom. And the “unprecedented” cyber breach disclosed recently [continues](#) to make headlines.

These stories remind us of the limits of our capacities. The strongest, richest nation on earth has been hacked apparently by nefarious foreign forces. And a virus 400 to a thousand times [smaller](#) than the diameter of a single human hair continues to threaten our planet.

But the wonderfully good news is the Savior who came at Christmas loves us as much today as when he was first born into our fallen race. All he has ever done he still can do today (Hebrews 13:8). And he will be with us always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

Celebrating birthdays but not the King

I have been thinking lately about the strange phenomenon that is Christmas in America.

Since there are approximately 328 million of us, presumably we will observe 328 million birthdays this year—minus new births and deaths. Each time, we will honor the person whose birth we celebrate.

Why don't more Americans do the same at Christmas?

Several radio interviewers have asked me in recent weeks why the birth of

our Savior has been so secularized in our culture. One answer, of course, is millions of Americans never have heard the true story of Christmas. They may know Jesus was born in Bethlehem, but they have no idea why.

I know—I was one of them. I grew up in a secular home in Houston, where we celebrated Christmas by giving gifts to each other, but gave no thought to Jesus. If you had asked me why Jesus' birth is relevant to us today, I would not have been able to answer your question.

However, there's another reason for the secularization of Christmas, one that tonight's Christmas Star answers.

Doing for us what we could not do for ourselves

The point of Christmas is that the one born in Bethlehem "will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21; cf. Luke 1:76-78). Here's the problem: If we don't believe we need to be saved, why would we celebrate the birth of a Savior?

Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, [observed](#): "I think that there is a lot of inner strength in all of you and in each and every one of us in order to just carry on and wherever we are, push, push, push." I'm grateful for her encouraging words and agree persistence and perseverance are vital in these challenging days.

However, as the pandemic proves every day, no amount of human effort can prevent our eventual death from some cause. Unless Jesus returns first, we will all die of something.

What if the COVID-19 virus suddenly mutated so it would infect every human and cause 100 percent mortality? What if there were no vaccine that worked against this mutated strain? This is where we are now with the

virus called death.

And once we are dead, we obviously and logically have no ability to bring ourselves back to life. If we are to survive death, some force outside ourselves will have to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

“Why would we need a Savior?”

This is precisely what Jesus was born to do—to die for our sins so we could be forgiven and receive eternal life by the grace of Almighty God.

Max Lucado [asks](#), “If we could save ourselves, why would we need a Savior?” He notes: “Jesus didn’t enter the world to help us save ourselves. He entered the world to save us *from* ourselves” (his italics). Then he adds: “You might save yourself from a broken heart or going broke or running out of gas. But you’re not good enough to save yourself from sin; you aren’t strong enough to save yourself from death.”

Think of it: If Jesus had not been born on Christmas, you and I would spend eternity separated from God in hell. That is simply a fact. Because Jesus was born, we can be born again. Because he died for us, he can live in us (1 Corinthians 3:16). And when we die, we do not die. In that instant, we are raised to life with him in his eternal paradise (Luke 23:43; John 14:3).

If someone discovered the cure for death itself, would we not celebrate their birth and gift with indescribable joy? The fact so many do not do so at Christmas can only mean they do not know what Jesus did for them or do not understand why they need what he came to give.

It is your privilege and mine to celebrate the true reason for the season and then to share this good news with everyone we can. The Christmas Star will soon be gone from the night sky, but the Light of the world “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

It never will.

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