

Birth of Christ and the Star

The story of Christ's coming into the world really starts in Genesis.

When God cursed the serpent for deceiving Eve, and then cursed Eve with pain in childbirth, he also spoke of the hope of a Deliverer to come:

Genesis 3:14-16 - "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

15 - "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

16 - "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

The Targum Jerusalem on Genesis 3 says:

Genesis 3:15 - And it shall be when the sons of the woman consider the law, and perform (its) instructions, they will be prepared to smite thee on thy head to kill thee; and when the sons of the woman forsake the commandment of the law, and perform not (its) instructions, thou wilt be ready to wound them in their heel, and hurt them. Nevertheless there shall be a medicine for the sons of the woman, but for thee, serpent, there shall be no medicine: but it is to be that for these there shall be a remedy for the heel in the days of the king Meshiha.
(Targum Palestine, Targum Jerusalem)

"And I will put enmity between you and between the WOMAN, and between your sons and her SONS. HE will remember you [the snake] and what you did to HIM from (at) the beginning, and you shall be observant unto (wary of) HIM at the end." (Targum Onkelos)

The Targums, usually turn away from metaphor to concrete imagery, and change "seed" to sons. But in the second half of the verse, the struggle is between the serpent (not his offspring) and an individual child of the woman. The Targum identifies the animosity as one that will span the ages, stretching even into the last days.

The Palestinian Targums make more of the striking and deadly blow inflicted:

"I will place enmity between you and the woman, between the clan of your sons and the clan of her sons. And whenever the woman's sons keep the commandments of the law, they will turn and strike you on your head. And whenever they abandon the commandments of the law, you will turn and bite them in their heels. But they will have healing, and you will not have healing. And they are going to make appeasement in the end, in the days of the King Messiah." (Targum Pseudo-Jonathan)

Genesis Rabbah 20:5 indicates that everyone will experience healing at the time of the Messiah except for the serpent.

The messianic interpretation of Genesis 3:15 is shared among all of the extant Palestinian Targums of this passage. That Targum Onqelos does not include this interpretation is characteristic of that particular Targum given that the Messiah is only mentioned in **Genesis 49:10-11** and **Numbers 27:17-18**.

In Targum Neofiti, the serpent retaliates against an individual. That individual is then identified as "his son" instead of the expected "her son(s)." It is possible that his identity is meant to be understood as the son of David. In 2 Samuel 7:12, the Lord promises David that he will raise up his seed and establish his throne. Targum Jonathan translates David's seed as the singular as opposed to the expected plural, therefore identifying David's seed as an individual. Thus the Messiah is to be attacked by the serpent in response to the disobedience of the woman's children, but he will have healing in the end.

In the Palestinian Targums, the "bruising" of the Hebrew text is understood to be death blows.

This is all reframed in **Revelation 12**.

John's vision was probably based on **Isaiah 7:14** - "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

...And a companion scripture, Isaiah 66:7 - "Before she (Zion/God's people/Israel) travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child."

The Targums variously translate it as, "before distress comes to her, she shall be redeemed; and before trembling comes upon her, her King (Messiah) shall be revealed"

...or in a different Targum, "before he should be born that should bring Israel into the last captivity, the Redeemer should be born"

In Isaiah, the woman gives birth either before the pain of labor or immediately at its onset, perhaps as a sign of the overcoming of the curse of **Genesis 3:16** - "...I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Catholics interpret this of Mary at Christ's birth).

But in **Revelation 12:2** she "cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered." She may serve as a picture of the Church bringing forth multiple new believers through persecution. The Targums often equate tribulation with labor pains.

In **Revelation 12** the child who is born seems to morph into his followers (His "Body") who are persecuted and must persevere to the end. So Revelation 12 includes both the singular meaning of "the Seed of the woman" and its plural interpretation as "children" or "the rest of her seed" who are persecuted and attacked.

The fruit of the tree of life is said to bring healing to the nations in **Revelation 22:2**.

See https://www.academia.edu/37708436/The_Rest_of_Her_Offspring_The_Relationship_between_Revelation_12_and_the_Targumic_Expansion_of_Genesis_3_15

When Eve gave birth for the first time, she thought it would be the promised redeemer:

Genesis 4:1- "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.'"

"with the help of the" is not in the original. In fact, a direct reading of this text would be, "I have given birth to a man: YHWH" Martin Luther translates it, "I have received a man, namely Jehovah."

The Midrash Rabbah also cites Rabbi Akiba admitting that the Hebrew construction would seem to imply that Eve thought she was begetting YHWH, which created interpretive difficulties for them, so the translation 'with the help of the LORD' is required.

Targum of Jonathan, Jerusalem Targum, and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan say of Genesis 4:1:

"I have gotten a man, the angel of the Lord."

Targum on **Isaiah 9:6** – "The prophet said to the house of David, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and He has taken the law upon Himself to keep it. His name is called from eternity, Wonderful, The mighty God, who liveth to eternity, the Messiah, whose peace shall be great upon us in His days."

The next time we see the promised redeemer in scripture, He appears associated with a star

THE STAR OF ABRAHAM

There is a tradition regarding Abraham, that at his birth, there was a star in the East,

"When our father Abraham was born, a star rose in the east and swallowed four stars in the four corners of heaven. Nimrod's wizards said to him: To Terah, at this hour, a son has been born, out of whom will issue a people destined to inherit this world and the world-to-come. With your permission, let his father be given a house full of silver and gold, on condition that his newly born son be slain."

- Beit haMidrash 2:118-196 cited in Sefer HaAgadah, Schocken Books

From the beginning, the children of Israel are likened to stars,

"And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed HaShem, and he counted it to him as righteousness."

- Genesis 15:5-6

According to Rashi, R' Shlomo Yitzhaki, God lifted up Abraham above the stars, and told him to look down on them,

"He took him out of the terrestrial sphere and lifted him above the stars. This explains the expression of הַבִּטָּה, looking down from above (Gen. Rabbah 44:12)."

- Rashi on **Genesis 15:5**, cited at Chabad.org

Stars reflect the stability and eternal consistency of being outside of time because they don't appear to move, as the planets do. Though twinkling stars appear small, they are blazing sources of immense power.

["Star" can also mean constellations, the Mazzaroth or 12 signs of the zodiac. The constellations as pictured by the ancients also describe this story of the Deliverer- the "gospel in the stars"]

Job 9:9 - "He is the Maker of the Bear [Ursa Major] and Orion, the Pleiades and the constellations of the south."

Job 38:31-32 - "Can you bind the beautiful Pleiades? Can you loose the cords of Orion? 32 Can you bring forth the constellations in their seasons..."

Psalm 19:1-4 - "...The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. 2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. 3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. 4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world..."

Isaiah 40:26 - "Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing."

See 'The Secret of the Star'
<https://ladderofjacob.com/2014/10/03/star/>

Star imagery next appears in the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 24

Numbers 24:7 - "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 Seth."

And in **Deuteronomy 1**

"The Lord your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky for multitude." - **Deuteronomy 1:10**

Rashi says this points to the eternal aspect of Israel:

“But were they [the Israelites] on that day as [many as] the stars of the heavens? Were they not only six hundred thousand? What, then, is [the meaning of] “And, behold, you are today...?” [It means]-Behold, you are compared to the sun, [signifying that you will] exist forever as do the sun, the moon, and the stars (cf. Sifrei).”

- Rashi on Deuteronomy 1:10, cited at Chabad.org

The Star as the Messiah

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not nigh When a king shall arise out of Jacob, And the Meshiha be anointed from Israel, He will slay the princes of Moab, and reign over all the children of men; And Edom shall be an inheritance, and Seir a possession of his adversaries. But Israel shall prosper in riches. One will descend from the house of Jacob, who will destroy him that escapes from the city of the peoples.”

- Targum Onkelos to **Numbers 24:17**

The Dead Sea Scrolls interpret the prophecy as follows,

“The star is the Interpreter of the Law who comes to Damascus as it is written, “A star has left Jacob, a staff has risen from Israel” (**Numbers 24:17**).”

- Dead Sea Scrolls, Damascus Document 7:19-21, Translated by Abegg, Wise and Cook, pg. 58

The Ramban, R' Moshe ben Nachman (1194 CE -1270 CE), states,

“THERE SHALL STEP FORTH A STAR OUT OF JACOB. Because the Messiah will gather together the dispersed of Israel from all corners of the earth, Balaam compares him [metaphorically] to a star that passes through the firmament from the ends of heaven, just as it is said about [the Messiah]: and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven, one like unto a son of man etc.”

- Ramban, Balak, Translated by Rabbi C. Chavel, Shilo Publishing House, Pg 283

The Maharal of Prague, R' Judah Loew ben Betzalel (1520 – 1609 A.D.) says,

“A star shall come forth from Yaakov...” He calls the King Messiah a “star” *nivdal* [separate, exalted] from man, just as a star is in the firmament and man is on earth. Messiah is described as “exalted, and on high, and exceedingly lofty” [Isaiah 52:13], such that he is called “star,” loftier than anything in the universe. The star rules over the world as it circuits the world (Devarim Rabbah 1:14), and the extent of his domain is described by the rest of the verse. The star is not fixed, but shoots across the heavens like zikin [meteors] that leave a trailing light [Rashi, Ber. 58b], with great force.”

- Maharal, The Lion Cub of Prague, Volume 3: Numbers, Deuteronomy, translated by Moshe David Kuhr, Gefen Publishing House, pgs. 64-65

The Zohar says,

“Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun’ (**Isa. 30:26**), and then

will this cause the seventh window to open to the whole world, whose star is the “Star of Jacob”, concerning which Balaam said: ‘There shall come a star out of Jacob’ (**Numbers 24:17**). This star will shine for forty days and forty nights, and when the Messiah shall be revealed and all the nations of the world shall gather around him, then will the verse of Scripture be fulfilled which says: ‘And in that day the root of Jesse which stands for an ensign of the peoples, to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious (**Isaiah 11:10**).’”

- Zohar II:172b, Soncino Press Edition

Yeshua is indeed the Star and the Scepter in Numbers 24, the unification of the two missions of Mashiach. He illuminates the world before he comes to reign, in that the world may have the opportunity to repent and return to the God of Israel. In the Book of Revelation, Yeshua says,

“I am the Root and the Offspring of David,
the Bright and Morning Star.”

- **Revelation 22:16**

The Day Star linked to Redemption

2 Peter 1:19 - "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:"

Revelation 2:28 - "He will rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery—just as I have received authority from My Father. And I will give him the morning star."

The process of the stars coming out, and finally the dawn breaking upon the world, is a pattern of what the *Geulah*, the Redemption, will look like,

“At night, though it be night, one has the light of the moon, the stars, and the planets. Then when is it really dark? Just before dawn! After the moon sets and the stars set and the planets vanish, there is no darkness deeper than the hour before dawn. And in that hour the Holy One answers the world and all that are in it: out of the darkness He brings forth the dawn and gives light to the world. The hind of the dawn [the morning star]—its light rays out as it rises. At the beginning, light comes little by little; then it spreads wider and wider, grows and increases; and at last it bursts into shining glory.”

- Sefer HaAggadah, Translated by Schocken Books, citing Midrash Tehillim 22:4 and 22:13; Aggadat Esther 7:10 (ed. Buber, p. 68); B. Yoma 29a

R' Moshe Alshich (1508–1593) says,

“I see it, but not now,” he refers to the gradual arrival of redemption for Israel, the Mashiach ben Joseph, to whom he refers as “there arose a tribe (rod) in Israel.”

- Midrash of R' Moshe Alshich on the Torah, translated and edited by Eliyahu Munk, pg. 910

“And now we will celebrate the praise of the King Messiah. He is going to arrive ‘with the clouds of heaven,’ and two seraphim will be on his right and on his left, as scripture says: ‘and behold, one like a human being came with the clouds of heaven’ (Daniel 7:13). Fiery seraphim will be sent into the palace, and stars will appear like fire in every place during the generation when the son of David comes.”

- Pirkei Mashiach, “Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic,” Translated by John C. Reeves

Believers are depicted as Stars

“And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

- **Daniel 12:2-3**

Philippians 2:15 - "Do everything without complaining or arguing, That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (or stars=*phosteres* in the cosmos)."

What was the Star of Bethlehem?

<https://bethlehemstar.com/setting-the-stage/why-are-we-hearing-this-now/>

It could have been a purely supernatural event. But many of the references indicate it was a natural event. It possibly could have been a super nova in the constellation Virgo, or a comet. These are all plausible explanations. But more likely it was a conjunction of planets, which carried great significance to ancient astronomers.

Herod died shortly after Christ's birth. According to Josephus, that was in 4 B.C.

But some recent scholarship disputes this date, making it instead 3/2 B.C.

<https://www.expreso.co.cr/centaurs/steiner/herod.html>

This new theory is critiqued and dismissed here:

<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/the-daniel-9-24-27-project/4365-the-first-year-of-herod-the-great-s-reign>

This make a big difference in which theory of the Star actually works.

Matthew 2:1 - "After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem"

Paul says the Jews had heard that Messiah had come because of something that appeared or happened in the heavens, the stars.

Romans 10:17-18 - "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. 18 But I ask: Did they [the Jews] not hear? Of course they did: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world."

He quotes **Psalm 19** about the stars, so what was this sign in the heavens?

Who Were the Magi?

Magi were often court astronomers who were consulted by the rulers of the day for guidance in affairs of state. The most respected school of Magi were from Persia and Babylon. They probably continued traditions passed down by Daniel 500 years earlier. Nebuchadnezer made the Jewish prophet Daniel Chief Magus of his court when Daniel was able to interpret a dream the other magi could not (Daniel 2).

This would explain their interest in things Jewish. Daniel had predicted the coming of Messiah:

Daniel 9:24-27 - "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

The Jews understood that the time period predicted by Daniel was ending, and their expectation of Messiah was intense. Several false Messiahs had already appeared.

Apparently this school of Magi were also acquainted with Daniel's prophecy and were looking for a sign in the heavens that would announce it.

Tacitus, *The Histories* (Book V), writes: "...most [of the Jews] firmly believed that their ancient priestly writings contained the prophecy that this was the very time when the East should grow strong and that men starting from Judea should possess the world." In *De Vita Caesarum: Divus Vespasian*, Suetonius records that "[t]here had spread over all the Orient an old and established belief that it was fated at that time for men coming from Judaea to rule the world." He goes on to say that Vespasian was so concerned with this prophecy of the Christ that he attempted to exterminate the entire Davidic family line—even helpless old men were killed.

Josephus notes this as one cause of the Jewish uprising against Rome: "But now, what did most elevate [the Jews] in undertaking this war was an ambiguous oracle that was also found in their sacred writings, how 'about that time, one from their own country should become governor of the habitable earth.' The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the wise men were thereby deceived in their determination."

From the time of the Exile onwards Babylon contained a strong Jewish colony, and the

knowledge of the Jewish prophecies of a Saviour-King, the Messiah, may have been well-known to the Babylonians and to the Magi.

Tiridates, the King of Armenia, led a procession of Magi to pay homage to Nero in Rome in AD 66 (Suetonius, Nero 13 and 30; Tacitus, Annals, 16:23; Dio Cassius, Roman History, 63:1), and Josephus records that some Magi also visited Herod previously in about 10 B.C.

What Was the Star?

A Comet?

A Harvard researcher suggests a comet that appeared in 5 B.C. could have been the star of Bethlehem. It was recorded by astronomers in China. It would have been in the southern sky as seen from Jerusalem, with the head of the comet close to the horizon and the tail is pointing vertically upward.

But comets were usually associated with disaster. Haley's comet appeared in 12 B.C. The historian Flavius Josephus described Halley's Comet on and around Jan. 25 in 66 A.D. as a "star resembling a sword" hanging over Jerusalem and considered it a portent of the destruction of the city by the Romans.

Also, Origen, following his suggestion that the star of Bethlehem was a comet, refers (Contra Celsum 1, 59) to a book 'Treatise on Comets' by Chaeremon the Stoic (which we no longer possess) which lists occasions comets appeared when "good was to happen." (The Chinese also thought these "broom stars" would sweep away evil).

Pliny (Natural History 11, 23) records that Augustus (63 BC to AD 14) dedicated a temple to a comet that appeared during athletic games he sponsored in 44 BC, just after the assassination of Julius Caesar. The common people assumed that the comet was taking the soul of Caesar to the heavens where the gods lived. The emblem of a comet was added to a bust of Caesar that was dedicated in the forum. Augustus then used an emblem of a comet on some of his own coins, presumably as a symbol of his own greatness and possibly as a symbol of his assumed deity. It seems clear therefore that at the time of Christ comets were associated with great kings and with important events.

See "The Star of Bethlehem" by Colin Humphreys
<https://www.asa3.org/ASA/topics/Astronomy-Cosmology/S&CB%2010-93Humphreys.html>

An example of "positive" comet appearances:

Halley's comet appeared previously in the Autumn months of 164 B.C. to coincide with the Maccabean revolt and the retaking of Jerusalem and the origin of the Hanukkah tradition, a festival of lights. Amazingly, this was punctuated by ANOTHER comet that appeared the next year from the months Ab to Tishrei. (This was recently discovered in

Babylonian cuneiform astronomical tablets.)

Although Josephus in hindsight saw it as a portent of disaster, the Judaeen revolutionaries of A.D. 66 understood the appearance of a comet in their own generation to be both a reminder of the victories of their fathers against Antiochus and a sign of victories to come in their own generation's struggle against Rome.

(See <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54694fa6e4b0eaec4530f99d/t/5acc0b5d8a922dc773000b7f/1523321695155/Halley%27s+Comet++and+Judaeen+Revolts+Revisited.pdf>)

Even the Talmud speaks of Halley's comet (which has a cycle of 75 years).

Rabbi Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua went together on a voyage at sea. Rabbi Gamliel carried a supply of bread. Rabbi Yehoshua carried a similar amount of bread and in addition a reserve of flour. At sea, they used up the entire supply of bread and had to utilize Rabbi Yehoshua's flour reserve. Rabbi Gamliel then asked Rabbi Yehoshua: "Did you know that this trip would be longer than usual, when you decided to carry this flour reserve?" Rabbi Yehoshua answered: "There is a star that appears every 70 years and induces navigation errors. I thought it might appear and cause us to go astray." - The Horayoth (Rulings) of the Talmud

A supernova is also possible.

"It can 'appear' as a new star in a constellation, and fade again over the following months," Robert Cockcroft, manager of the McCallion Planetarium at McMaster University in Ontario, told the BBC in 2012.

"It is also not too bright, explaining why we don't have any records of it in the west."

A Triple Conjunction?

Some researchers focus on a triple conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces, which occurred in 7 B.C. as the Bethlehem Star.

Saturn takes nearly 30 years to go around the sun, while Jupiter takes nearly 12 years. Thus, every 20 years, Jupiter catches up to Saturn as viewed from Earth.

Jupiter appeared to pass above Saturn three times, namely May 20, October 27, and November 12.

According to 15th-century Portuguese Jewish philosopher Isaac Abrabanel, this conjunction was important to the Jewish nation because it had occurred to mark the birth of Moses. It occurs only about every 900 years. For the Magi it would have been a signal of something very significant.

Professor David Hughes, an astronomer from the University of Sheffield, published a

review of the theories on the star in 1976 in which he agrees with Abrabanel. Hughes believes that "events indicate that Jesus Christ was probably born in the Autumn of that year, around October, 7 B.C."

The truth may be a combination of these:

Shortly after the triple conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 7 B.C., Mars joined Jupiter and Saturn in the sky so that in February 6 B.C. the three planets (still in Pisces) were separated by only about eight degrees. This would have aroused expectations of a final sign to confirm the birth of a new "world ruler."

The conjunction of 7 B.C. and the planetary massing of 6 B.C., alerted the Magi to the coming birth, but they did not set out until the comet appeared in the east, in March/April of 5 B.C., indicating that the birth was imminent or had occurred. The comet was visible for 70 days, which allowed plenty of time to travel from Babylon to Jerusalem. (Nebuchadrezzar took 23 days to travel from north of Jerusalem to Babylon in a rapid return to take up the throne in Babylon in 605 BC.)

Herod, leaving nothing to chance, decided to kill all boys born since the first stage of the triple conjunction in May 7 BC, two years previously.

A case can also be made for a different triple conjunction - a spectacular meeting of Jupiter and Venus and the star Regulus in the constellation Leo in 3/2 B.C. But this requires using the disputed date for Herod's death.

It should be noted that if God had wanted us to know and mark the birthday of Jesus, He would have given us more specific information. Instead we only have assumptions. Even the early church gave conflicting dates and years.

The Census

Luke 2:1-5 says a census was taken by Emperor Caesar Augustus around the time of the birth of Christ, and Joseph travelled with Mary from Nazareth to his home town of Bethlehem in order to register.

This census was probably not for the purpose of taxation, as is usually assumed.

The fifth century historian Orosius (Adv. Pag. VI.22.7, VII.2.16) states '[Augustus] ordered that a census be taken of each province everywhere and that all men be enrolled. So at that time, Christ was born and was entered on the Roman census list as soon as he was born. . . . In this one name of Caesar all the peoples of the great nations took oath, and through the participation in the census, were made part of one society'. Josephus (Ant. XVII, ii, 4) appears to refer to the same event: 'when all the people of the Jews gave assurance of their goodwill to Caesar, and to the king's government, these very men [the Pharisees] did not swear, being above six thousand.' From the context of these words in Josephus, this census of allegiance to Caesar

Augustus occurred about one year before the death of Herod the Great.

There is one further problem with this census. Luke 2:2 is usually translated 'This census was first made when Quirinius was governor of Syria', but Quirinius did not become governor of Syria until AD 6. However, the Greek sentence construction of Luke 2:2 is unusual and an alternative translation is: 'This census took place before the one when Quirinius was governor of Syria'. As noted above, from Josephus this latter census can be dated to AD 6, and Luke (Acts 5:37) was well aware of it. Thus the earlier census reference by Luke in Luke 2:1-5 provides a chronological clue to the birth of Christ, and from the context in Josephus (Ant. XVII, ii, 4) this census of allegiance occurred about 1 year before the death of Herod the Great.

Some say this dating would place the birth of Christ in the spring of 5 BC. But much evidence places His birth in autumn around Rosh Hashanah. Perhaps the comet was just "punctuation" - confirmation of the birth, and signified only that the birth had happened previously, and the Magi should begin their trip to worship Him.