

Glossary of Names and Terms

- **Acronic/Acronycal Rising**

The gradual migration of visible planets from west to east through the zodiac eventually brings them up over the western horizon where they are visible after sunset. Their nearness to the sun is important, because the sun is always in the house of the zodiac which is thought to be in control at the moment. So, the acronic rising of a planet permits an observer to see it at a time when it has major astrological meaning. The other such time is in the morning at sunrise. See Heliacal Rising.

- **Census**

The Roman census had two parts. The first was the registration (Greek term, apographé), and it was followed later by the actual payment of taxes (Greek term, apotímesis). A true Roman census only counted Roman citizens. Augustus Caesar accomplished three true censuses during his rule. The results were as follows:

28 B.C.	4,063,000 citizens
8 B.C.	4,233,000
14 A.D.	4, 937,000

We have to admire the administrative ability of the Romans here. For census records to have any value they had to be accurate, accessible, reasonably current. Besides, the Roman Empire covered a vast amount of territory from western Europe to the countries around the Mediterranean Sea. One may wonder if the Romans were not also concerned to have an accurate estimate of the numbers of people who were not Roman citizens. In that case a registration like the Pater Patriae might have quietly served this purpose along with the stated purpose of honoring the Emperor.

- **Comet**

A comet is a solid mass of rock and ice orbiting a star. Pressure from the radiant energy of the star melts some of the ice and pushes it in a direction away from the star. This gives the comet its tail. Comets were regarded as signs of impending evil across the ancient world. It is unlikely for this reason alone that the Star of Bethlehem was a comet; what the Magi followed was for them clearly a sign of something good.

- **Conjunction**

Although astronomers have technical definitions for conjunctions, the basic idea behind them is simply this: objects in the sky appear to move close to each other. Two planets are in conjunction if they are close to one another in the sky. Conjunctions have always been of interest to astrologers.

- **Ecliptic**

The ecliptic is the path through the stars which the sun follows during the course of the year. The visible planets are always seen close to the ecliptic line as well.

- **Filmer, W. E.**

In 1966 W. E. Filmer opened the question of redating of the year of Herod's death with his article: "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great." (Journal of Theological Studies 17.) He was the first in modern times to say that the infamous king's death should be dated to 1 B.C. Filmer's work has been hotly debated, and many have been quick to reject his assertions. But Ernest L. Martin and Jack Finegan have made careful arguments supporting Filmer's conclusions. The discovery of an additional letter in the oldest manuscripts of Josephus has now confirmed Filmer's suspicion about the Josephus text, and further strengthened the argument.

- **Finegan, Jack**

Professor Jack Finegan was during his lifetime one of the most respected experts in the world on matters of when biblical events happened: biblical chronology. He was also a New Testament scholar and archaeologist. In 1964 Finegan's *Handbook of Biblical Chronology* became available for the first time. In it he dated Herod's death to 4 B.C., with Jesus' birth dated earlier. Finegan set out to revise and update his earlier work. At the end of his illustrious career he published the revised edition of the handbook (1998). Among the few changes he felt he had to make was the reconsidered year of Herod's death and the reconsideration of the year of the birth of Jesus Christ. Finegan came to accept and defend that the death of Herod happened in 1 B.C., with the birth of Jesus happening in 3 or 2 B.C.

- **Heliacal Rising**

Before the sun rises, the eastern horizon gradually becomes brighter and makes the light of the stars or planets there indistinguishable. As planets move through the sky they all eventually reach this part of the sky before the sun rises. This is heliacal rising. Because a planet in heliacal rising was near the sun it had great interest for astrologers. See Acronic Rising.

- **Herod the Great**

Herod was proclaimed King of the Jews by the Roman Senate and sent to drive the Parthians led by Matthias Antigonus from his new kingdom in Palestine. The historian Josephus gave a time reference for Herod's capture of Jerusalem which must be understood to mean the fall of 36 B.C. Some time after this Antigonus was killed by special order of Mark Antony. Josephus says Herod ruled 34 years from the death of Antigonus. If Josephus is correct, the 4 B.C. year for Herod's death held by many cannot be correct. Herod is also the king who appears in Matthew's stories of the Magi and of the slaughter of the baby boys in and around Bethlehem.

- **Josephus, Flavius**

Josephus, born Joseph Ben Matityahu, was born in 37 and lived until sometime after 100 A.D. During the First Jewish Revolt he emerged from a cave to surrender to the Romans while almost all the others in the cave had killed each other under a suicide pact. The character of Josephus is therefore questionable, but his histories (*Antiquities of the Jews* and *Jewish Wars*) supply most of what we know about Judea and Galilee in the years before and during the New Testament. Josephus wrote these works while a patron of the Flavian family in Rome. He is therefore known as Flavius Josephus, the name he took. No one tells us more about Herod than Josephus. His primary source for Herod was the history of Nicolas of Damascus. Nicolas was a member of Herod's court, prone to exaggerate in Herod's favor. Josephus was a relative of the beloved Queen Miramne whom Herod put to death, prone to criticize Herod. When it comes to simple facts of history, though, Josephus is usually right, though not always. Josephus barely mentions Jesus of Nazareth. How can this be? One answer is: a shrewd survivor of a suicide pact now living on a Roman pension is not likely to extol anyone considered a Jewish Messiah.

- **Jupiter**

Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system, and the most significant to astrologers in that it was considered the star, or planet, of kings. Jupiter can easily be seen with the eye. It appears as a bright, yellow-orange light. Rabbi Roy Rosenberg has maintained that in biblical times Jupiter was known as *Sedeq* ("righteous"), and was believed by at least some Jews to be the Star of the Messiah.

- **Kepler, Johannes**

Johannes Kepler lived from 1571 to 1630. He was the brilliant mathematician who first realized that planetary orbits are elliptical. In Kepler's day there was not yet a hard distinction made between astrology and astronomy. Kepler calculated the positions of Jupiter and Saturn in 7 and 6 B.C. He realized they were in repeated conjunction then in the constellation of Pisces. Kepler thought these conjunctions might have been the precursor to the Star of Bethlehem. This theory is often discussed by those who believe Herod died in 4 B.C.

- **Leo**

Leo the lion is a constellation in the southern sky, and a major house of the zodiac. The similarity between the image of Leo and the Patriarch Jacob's blessing of his son Judah is noteworthy (Genesis 49). Jacob first says Judah is "a lion's whelp." Then he says that the scepter will not depart from between the feet of Judah until Shiloh comes. Shiloh is an enigmatic name meaning "he to whom it belongs." The bright star Regulus shines in Leo between its front feet, the location of the scepter in the Genesis text. Jupiter, the kings' planet, came into conjunction with Regulus three times in succession in 3 and 2 B.C. Since Judah the lion was the tribe from whom the Messiah was to come, it is easy to

see that an astrologer familiar with Scripture might conclude that the Messiah was about to be born.

- **Lunar Eclipse**

A lunar eclipse is the darkening of the moon due to the earth's shadow which falls upon it at certain times. In some eclipses all or part of the moon becomes completely black. In other eclipses the moon appears a rusty red color.

- **Magi**

Magi is a general term for astrologers. (Singular: magus.) Depending on where they came from magi could be ambassadors, rulers, astrologers, or scribes. Many held them in high esteem; some considered them frauds. Older translations of the Bible call the magi who visited Jesus "wise men." Matthew does not say there were three of them, nor give their names.

- **Martin, Ernest L.**

In the late 1970's Ernest L. Martin began to wage his crusade for redating the death of Herod, and therefore redating the birth of Jesus Christ. His book, *The Star that Astonished the World*, is must reading for anyone interested in these and all related topics. See also W. E. Filmer and Jack Finegan.

- **Moses of Khorene**

Moses of Khorene is a little-known historian from Armenia. He was born around the year 404 A.D., and lived to the age of 110. Moses was well-travelled and well-educated. In his *History* he states that Roman agents brought busts of the Emperor into temples and other centers in the second year of King Abgar (3 B.C.). People swore their loyalty to the Emperor, presumably while standing before the image of the Emperor. A stone inscription found in Paphlygonia reports much the same thing for that region in the same year. Martin and Finegan believe this event is the registration reported by Luke which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

- **Nova**

Nova means "new star." The star is not really new, but becomes much brighter than before due to a nuclear explosion.

- **Orosius, Paul**

Paul Orosius was another of the Christian Church's first historians. He was born in Spain, and was a contemporary and associate of Augustine and Jerome. Orosius wrote in his *History* that all people everywhere had been ordered to swear their allegiance to Augustus Caesar, and that this was the first time the human race had been united in such a way. This statement likely refers to the registration which brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. Orosius does not report it as a census, but as something far greater. See Moses of Khorene and Paphlygonian Inscription.

- **Paphlygonian Inscription**

An inscription on stone was recovered in Paphlygonia, a region in Asia Minor. It recorded a registration dated to the year 3 B.C. Romans and residents of Paphlygonia were required to take an oath of obedience to the Emperor. See Moses of Khorene and Orosius.

- **Quirinius**

Publius Sulpicius Quirinius was a Roman of high standing with an illustrious career. He is mentioned by Luke as the person in some way associated with the registration which caused Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, rather than in Nazareth. Quirinius was the person in charge (rector) of Gaius, who would have been the next Emperor had he not died from wounds. The Roman writer Dio Cassius places Quirinius in charge of Gaius in Syria around the year 1 B.C. Further, the scene described in which Gaius leaves Rome does not mention Quirinius, leading to the conclusion that he joined the expedition later, likely in Syria. Judging from this alone it is certainly plausible that Quirinius was in Syria with some kind of authority when the registration of allegiance oaths took place in 3 or 2 B.C. In 6 A.D. Quirinius was sent to end the rule of Herod's son Archelaus. A true Roman census followed. Some scholars, aware of this, but often unaware of his earlier time in Syria, have concluded that Luke made a mistake in dating Jesus birth. It appears these scholars are themselves mistaken.

- **Regulus**

Regulus is one of four bright stars known as royal stars in the ancient Middle East. It occupies a place in Leo between the front feet.

- **Supernova**

A supernova is the brightening of an existing star due to an explosion which destroys the star. It is not the same phenomenon as a nova. A supernova may have sufficient brightness to be seen even in daylight.

- **Venus**

Next to the moon Venus appears as the brightest object in the sky. It is a planet similar in size to Earth. Rich with astrological meaning, Venus was sometimes considered the mother planet.

- **Zodiac**

The zodiac is simply the succession of the twelve major constellations an observer on earth will see at night as the earth orbits the sun over the course of the year. The constellation which the sun is shining in at the time cannot be seen, but is the constellation, or house, of interest at that moment. See Acronic/acronycal Rising and Heliacal Rising.