

Star of Bethlehem to Rise Again

For the first time in 800 years, a Christmas miracle will occur. Well, maybe not the first Christmas miracle, but one that definitely offers a memorable end to 2020.

On Dec. 21, Jupiter and Saturn will come so close together they will appear to almost collide, creating a “Star of Bethlehem” or the “Christmas star.”

“Alignments between these two planets are rather rare, occurring once every 20 years or so, but this conjunction is exceptionally rare because of how close the planets will appear to be to one another,” Patrick Hartigan, astronomer at Rice University, told *Forbes*.

For followers of Jesus, this event is symbolic of an important piece of history. The biblical story of the three wise men following the star to worship the newborn King is found in Matthew 2:1-2:

“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who was born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him.’”

While a close alignment between Jupiter and Saturn is relatively rare, this phenomena is highly anticipated due to the length of time since the last occurrence of its kind. Hartigan says, “You’d have to go all the way back to just before dawn on March 4, 1226, to see a closer alignment between these objects visible in the night sky.”

Jamie Carter, a science, technology and travel journalist for *Forbes*, breaks down the scientific significance of this event:

“All the planets orbit the sun on the same plane. Jupiter orbits the sun every 12 Earth years while Saturn takes a more leisurely 29 Earth years. The math is such that every 20 years Jupiter ‘laps’ Saturn from our point of view on Earth, and for a moment they appear very close to each other.”

Just as the wise men traveled through perils amidst political unrest under King Herod’s reign, the Bethlehem Star offered hope, peace and promise of a brighter future, a reminder that rings even more true today.

And as Bonnie RJH tweeted, “After a year such as we have had – now it will end with the Christmas Star of Bethlehem shining in the sky!”

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– Bonnie RJH (@FF16sh) December 3, 2020

So on Dec. 21, viewers can grab a blanket, a cup of hot chocolate and gather outside about 45 minutes after sunset with loved ones to remember the greatest story ever told. Perhaps gazing at the astronomical event will inspire those participating to read the Christmas story from the Gospels and feel closer than ever to the three magi who journeyed afar to meet their Savior. {eoa}