

Challenge

*The Woman & Child in Revelation 12
was Understood Astronomically in the
1st Century AD*

**I want you to see how 1st
century readers of John's
revelatory letter could quite
easily decipher the spiritual
symbols it contains**



**It is critical that
you understand a
few salient points
before continuing**

First century Jews:

- Were NOT bible readers
- Followed the Torah
- Followed culture
- Listen to their rabbi
- Listened to their father
- Listened to their elders
- Read current literature
- Discussed ideas
- Adopted Greek thinking
- Were heavily influenced by being in Babylon
- Were very secular
- Knew about local pagan ideas

Therefore...

1st century readers of Revelation 12:1-7 would have immediately understood it as an astronomical message.

This was because of the cosmological views of their day.

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. →

→ And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

Revelation 12:4-6 (NKJV)

The **child** is the Messiah (Jesus).

This is an allusion to the prophecy in Psalm
2:7-9

The language in these verses enabled them to deduce “a real-time date for the birth of Jesus—a date that is laden with symbolism that first-century Jews would have understood as connecting the messianic birth to the sin of the Watchers.”

This came from their understanding of ‘The Book of Enoch’.



Chapter 5

The Time of Jesus' Birth

A rectangular button with a rainbow gradient background and the text "Read and Listen" in white.

The suggestion was made in the last chapter that the Magi presented their gifts to Jesus on December 25, 2 B.C.E. This was not, however, the time of his birth. When the Magi arrived, Joseph and Mary were no longer in a stable with Jesus. They were now residing in a house (Matthew 2:11). Jesus had been circumcised (Luke 2:21) and dedicated at the temple some forty days after his birth (Luke 2:22-24). He was then being called a *paidion* (toddler) and no longer a *brephos* (infant). When the Magi arrived, Jesus was already walking and was able to speak a few words as most normal children would be able to do when several months old. Soon after the Magi left, Herod killed the male children in and around Bethlehem who were two years of age or younger (Matthew 2:16). This does not mean Jesus was exactly two years old at the time. The fact that all children two years and under were slain shows that Herod was taking every possible interpretation of the Magi into account for the time of Jesus' birth.

The sun, moon, and stars are definitely astronomical, so they require our attention to decipher their message.

Scholars agree that the **woman** who gives birth to the Messiah, is persecuted and then flees, is a picture of the faithful community of Israelis who existed before and after Jesus' time.

Israel is described as ‘The Virgin of Zion’ in the OT who produces the Messiah in fulfilment of prophecy. Mary prophetically mirrored this.

(See 2 Kings 19:21; Isaiah 37:21; Jeremiah 14:17; 18:13; 31:4, 21; Amos 5:2; Lamentations 1:15; 2:13)

“The meaning of the virgin and the twelve stars around her head is evident in Second Temple Period Jewish literature, as well as later rabbinic thought.”

(1) The sun, moon and 12 stars were understood to represent Jacob, his wife and the 12 tribes. (*Genesis 37:9*)

(2) Also, Jewish writings of the time portrayed the sun, moon and stars as Abraham and Sarah and their progeny.

(3) And, the High Priest's garments indicated that earthly Israel had a heavenly identity.

(4) On top of that, Jewish writings interpreted the 12 signs of the zodiac as the 12 tribes of Israel.

“Therefore, the twelve stars surrounding the woman call to mind the twelve constellations, which connote the Israel of God viewed from the perspective of Israel’s heavenly life or calling.”

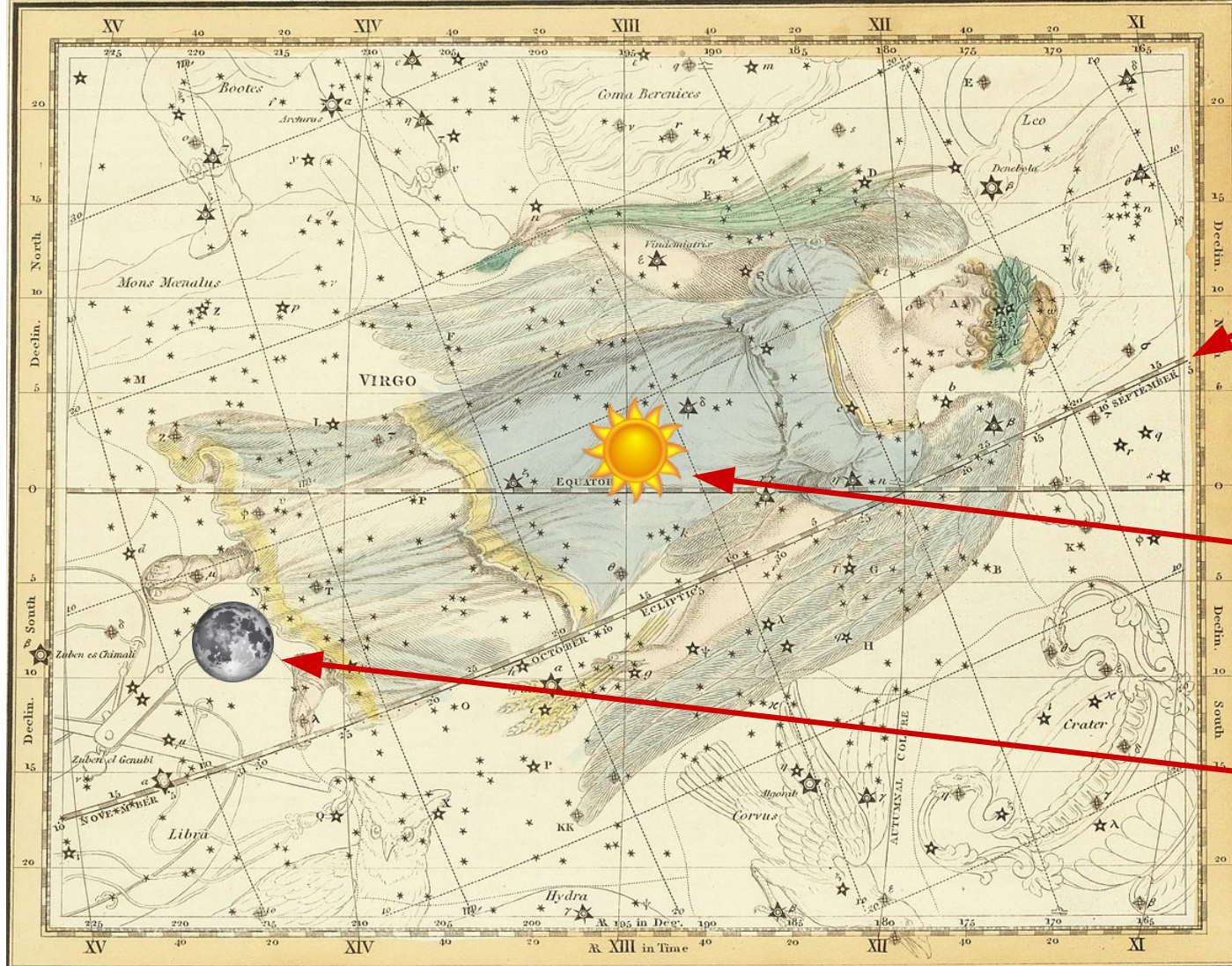
The woman is featured as being in Heaven (in the heavens) and the sun and the moon are associated with her.

She is “clothed” with the sun, there are twelve stars around her head, and the moon is at her feet. So, she is an astronomical (heavenly) sign.

According to their cosmological understanding, the woman is the constellation Virgo.

The description of being “clothed” with the sun (‘adorned by the sun’) is standard astrological language for the sun being in the midst of the constellation.

Challenge



Ecliptic
plane

VIRGO

Sun

Moon

GRAPHIC: By Alexander Jamieson - <https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/66775/virgo-jamieson>, Public Domain,
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While ever the sun is in the woman (Virgo) and the moon is at her feet, it is also an astrological sign.

Astronomically, this event occurs when Virgo is on the ecliptic plane. This is the imaginary line in the sky that the sun and moon follow in their journey through the zodiac constellations.

In this case, the sun is in the position somewhere on Virgo's mid-body, between the neck and the knees.

This is where a pregnant woman carries her child.

This is the sign the Magi would have seen and understood, especially if they knew about Isaiah 7:14 from the Babylonian exile.

They would have made an astro-theological link with the sign because Virgo had strong associations with ancient ‘mother goddess’ figures who would produce divine kings.

Interestingly, this astrological arrangement is in the heavens for 20 days every year.

However, the moon in its position cuts the timeframe down to about 90 minutes and to a specific location in time.



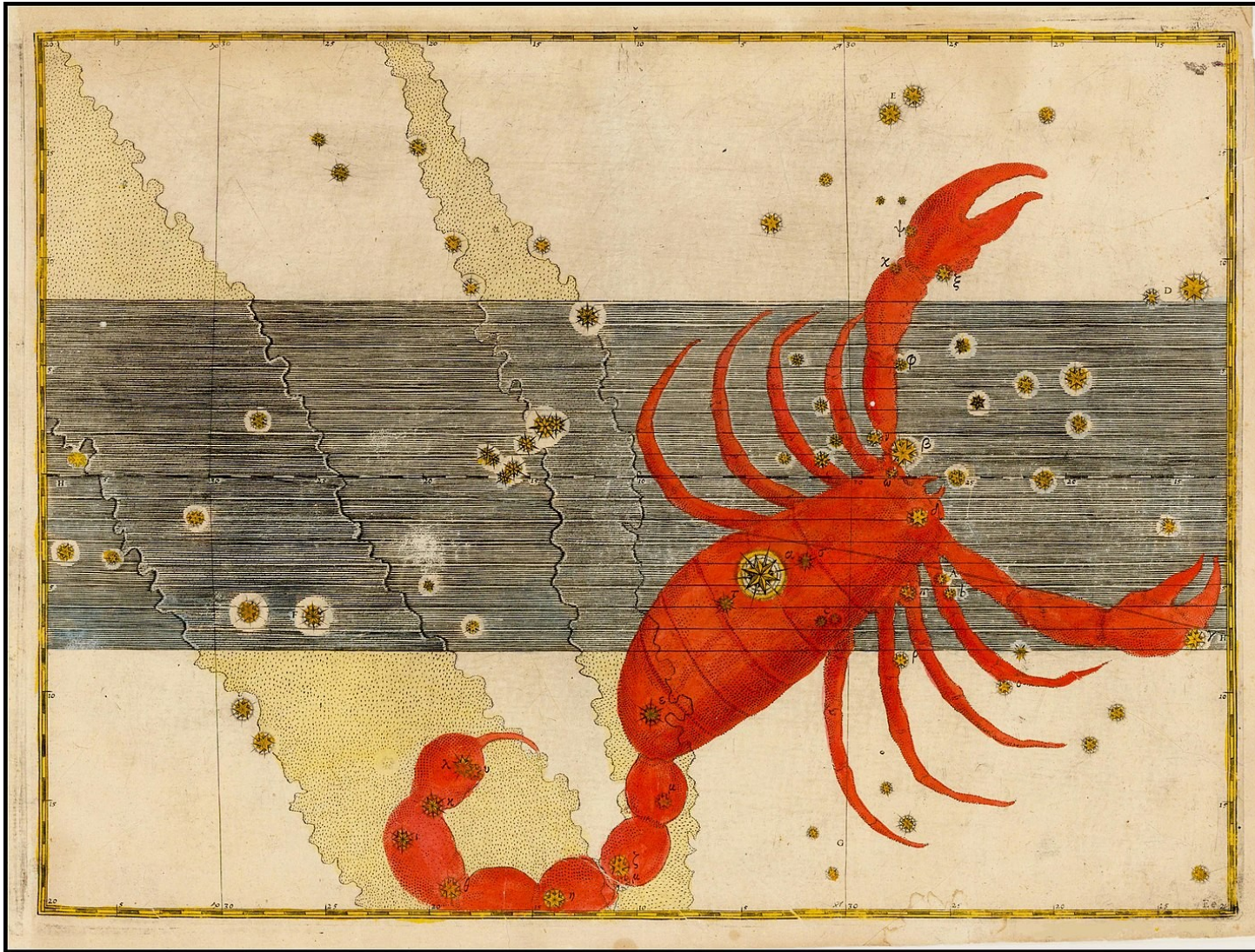
The **dragon** is the ‘Chaos Chief’, Satan. First century believers would have also picked this up from their cosmology.

“Throughout the ancient Near East, the sea monster symbolized the war between good and evil, between the gods and chaos”

“[T]he prototypical Dragon of the sky is really ancient Scorpio, originally a larger set of stars than the present constellation. It was truly gigantic, even by celestial zodiac standards, since it originally consisted of two [modern] zodiacal signs (Libra/Claws and Scorpio). It was only relatively recently, that is, about 237 B.C., that it was divided by the Greeks.”

“[T]he entire constellation of Libra was considered to be claws of Scorpius (Chelae Scorpionis) in Ancient Greek times, with a set of scales held aloft by Astraea (represented by adjacent Virgo) being formed from these western-most stars during later Greek times. The division into Libra was formalised during Roman times.”

SCORPIO



GRAPHIC: By Johann Bayer - <https://www.raremaps.com/gallery/detail/37942/scorpio-stars-heightened-in-gold-bayer>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=91243479>

Scorpio is directly under the feet of Virgo.

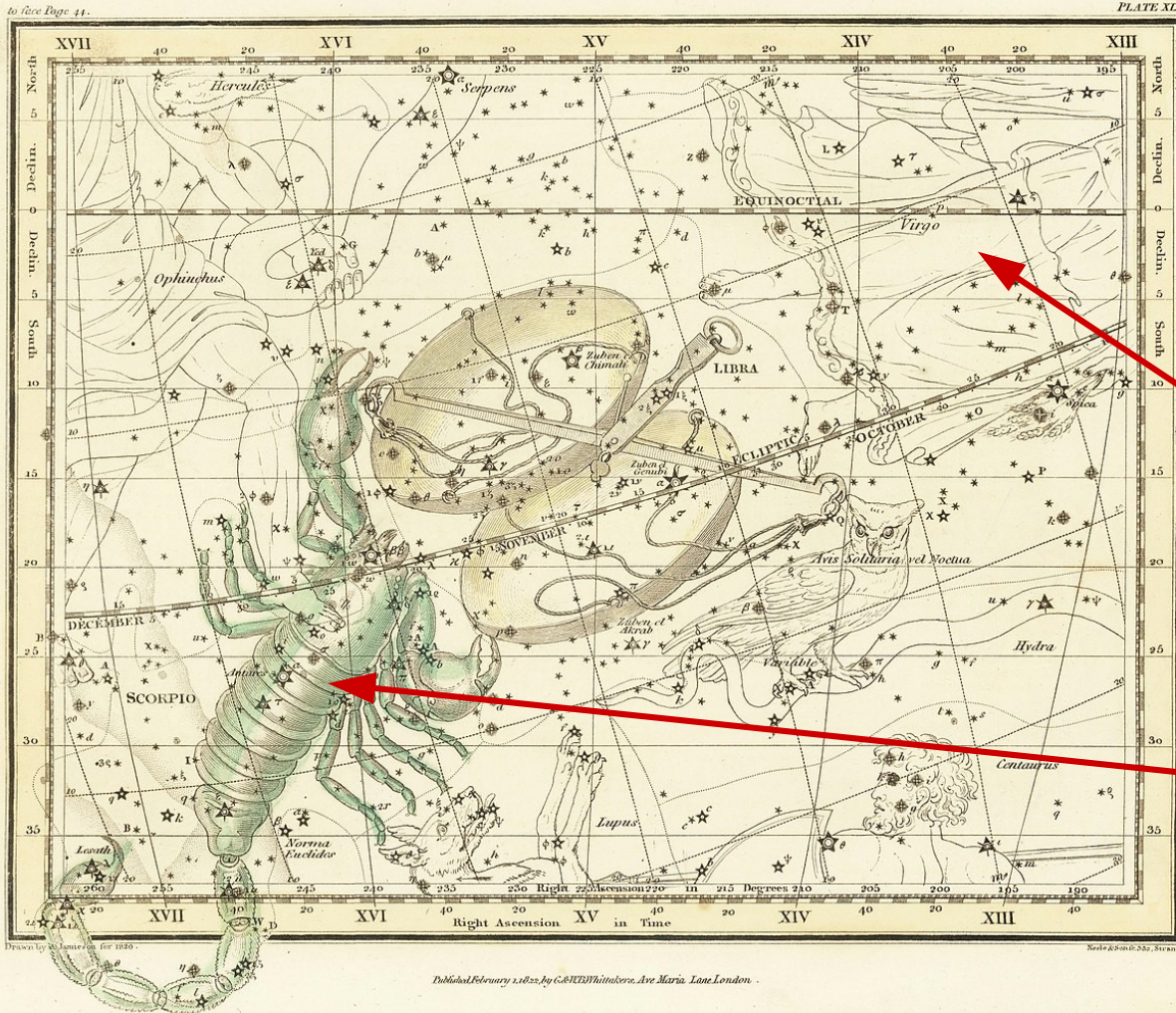
This is the dragon situated in the right position to eat the child as soon as it is born.



The close proximity of Scorpio to Virgo

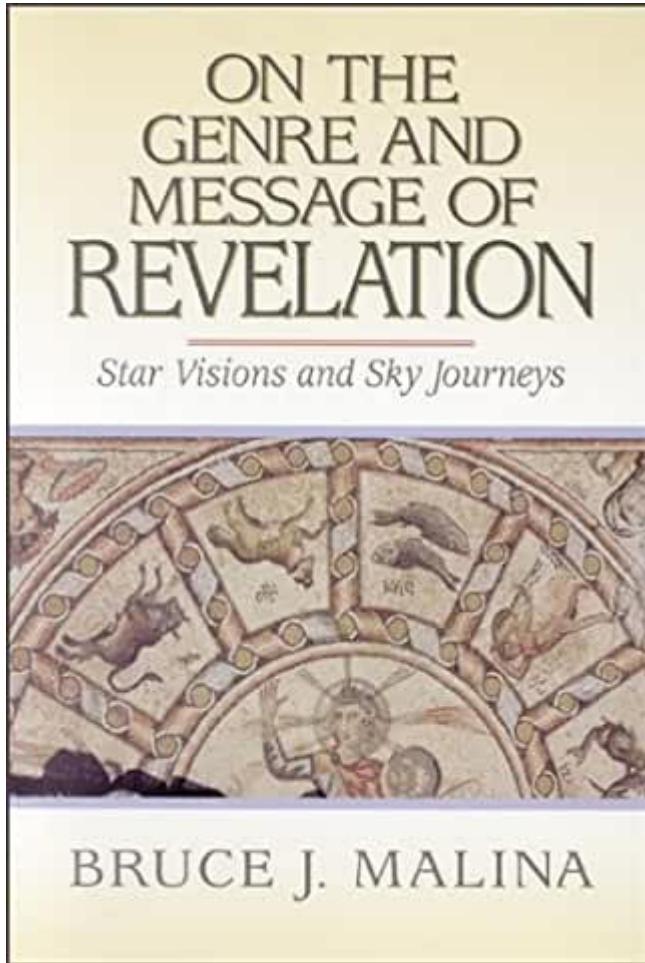
Virgo

Scorpio



“John’s wording here and the immediate context is designed to create the impression that it appeared as if the devil had won the day—that the child would be killed (devoured)—but the resurrection resulted in victory (enthronement) for the Messiah. The dragon was defeated.”

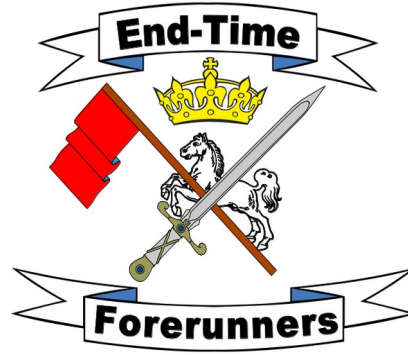
Can you now see how the symbolism in Revelation was easily picked up by 1st century readers who had a different cosmology to us?



I will now produce a series of investigations into understanding the message of Revelation using the cosmology of 1st century Jews



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L.D. Smart

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