



## Chapter 4

# ***THE ASTRONOMICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE CAMP***

The Third Altar of the Temple which was that associated with the sacrifice of the Red Heifer (that the prophet Ezekiel said was located “without the sanctuary”) was also situated “without the camp” of Israel as it was defined in the time of Jesus (Leviticus 4:12,21; 6:11). To discover the site of the crucifixion of Jesus, it is supremely important to realize what the geographical features of the “Camp of Israel” were like in the time of Jesus?

The Jewish authorities positioned the “Camp” around Jerusalem by using the model that Moses provided in the wilderness. The “Camp” was designed to be in a circular manner. It was constructed in the form of a circle surrounding the holy city with a radius extending exactly 2000 cubits from a strategic center point in the Temple. This circle was astronomical in design. Its celestial configuration had been established by Moses for specific reasons. The astronomical design provided a prophetic and calendar theme to instruct the Israelites. The circular design was intended to mimic the celestial environment that surrounded the palace and territories of God’s own realm located in the heavenlies. We should recall that

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the Tabernacle (and Temples) as well as “the Camp” were patterned by Moses to depict within our earthly sphere of influence the celestial aspect of God’s palace and “Camp” in his heavenly realm (Exodus 25:9; Hebrews 8:5; 9:23).

The center point of this astronomical circle surrounding the city of Jerusalem (which represented the whole of the “Camp of Israel”) was positioned precisely between the inner and outer curtains of the Temple in the Holy Place. This center point was located between the Table of Shewbread on the north with its twelve loaves, which the early Jewish historian Josephus said represented the twelve months of the Zodiac, and the Menorah (the seven lamps) on the south side which Josephus said represented the seven visible planets (Josephus, *War* V.5,5 ¶¶213-217). This circular alignment involving the twelve months (loaves) and the seven planets (seven lamps) was adopted to accord with a representation of the ecliptic of the sun (the circular path that the sun takes through the heavens each year). This had the effect of placing the center point of this zodiacal circle in front of the Holy of Holies and just a few yards east of the Altar of Golden Incense.

### ***The Astronomical Design of the Camp***

Though the Holy Scriptures in other areas utterly condemn the use of Astrology as conceived by the Gentiles and when the celestial motions are used for wrong purposes (Isaiah 47:11-13), the placement of the twelve tribes of Israel around the Tabernacle was intended by Moses to provide the authorities in Israel with a knowledge of God’s plan for the nation of Israel, both for its present existence and what will happen to Israel in the future. This was the type of astronomical teaching that we find in Psalm 19. This kind of astronomical teaching is biblical and proper. This is not like the Babylonian and Egyptian astrological concepts which use pagan principles and Gentile religious themes to explain their prophetic meanings. The Gentiles actually corrupted the prophetic teaching found in the design of the “Camp of Israel” and placed on it a

hodgepodge of heathen interpretations that completely obliterated the true prophetic meaning that God gave to Moses. Though such Gentile forms of Astrology were proscribed for Israel, the zodiacal significance of the “Camp of Israel” was well known by Moses and the prophets and it was wholeheartedly approved because it was given to Moses by God.

So, what about this astronomical design of the “Camp”? The outer boundary of this zodiacal design was an imaginary circle positioned by the Jewish authorities to be 2000 cubits (a radius of about 3000 feet) from that central point in the Holy Place of the Temple. It is important to realize that the outer boundary of this circle denoted the limits of the “Camp.” And since the Temple and its associated precincts in the time of Jesus were patterned after the Tabernacle and its astronomical divisions designed by Moses, this circle around the Temple contained twelve equal portions (twelve equal “slices”) equaling the zodiacal arrangement established for the twelve tribes that encircled the Tabernacle at each encampment of the Israelites. This was the pattern that God had Moses to design (Exodus 25:9). It is important to realize that the outer limits of this circular encampment area were 2000 cubits from the center point of the astronomical circle whose center was situated on the floor of the Holy Place. As we continue in this book, we will see how this information helps us to locate the place of Jesus’ crucifixion.

### ***The Camp of Israel Was a Celestial Clock***

The astronomical design of the Camp made the Camp of Israel to be circular in design. This circularity is not to be confused with the perimeter limits of the Sabbath Day Journey which were reckoned in the time of Jesus to be a square around Jerusalem and measured to be 2000 cubits from the outer walls of the city. This square-shape for the Sabbath limits, rather than a circle, was allowed by the Rabbis because it permitted the Israelites to have an advantage of the extra space afforded by the corners. This procedure autho-

rized more room to maneuver on the Sabbath than would a circle (*Erubin* 4:8; 5:1).

It is important that we not confuse the two measurements. Though there are similarities (especially in using 2000 cubits as a standard measurement), the Sabbath Day Journey parameters were delineated as a square, while the camps parameters were circular.

The “Camp,” however, was different in another way. The dimensions of the Camp were not determined by measurement from the walls. It was to be circular in shape, like a gigantic analog clock and it had astronomical significance. This large celestial clock surrounding Jerusalem was reckoned to be read by the Jewish authorities in a counterclockwise manner when they used it to determine astronomical matters that concerned prophetic or calendrical themes. It was patterned to be an earthly counterpart to the outer precincts encompassing God’s palace and its surrounding areas in heaven. This astronomical design in circular fashion reflected God’s heavenly courtyard and the outer celestial areas associated with his divine residence (*Hebrews* 8:5; 9:23).

### ***Each Tribe Had Its Zodiacal Sign Within the Camp***

Moses positioned each of the twelve tribes of Israel as representing a particular zodiacal sign in its regular astronomical order. The tribe of Judah was given the prime position in this zodiacal design by being located directly east of the entrances to the Tabernacle and the later Temples. Let me explain. Four principal tribes were selected to denote each of the four seasons of the year. Judah was first, Dan was second, Reuben was third and Ephraim was fourth. The positions of these four prime tribes were arranged 90 degrees from each other (within a 360 degrees circle) to accord with those four seasons of the year. Judah was selected to be the tribe directly east of the Tabernacle and it was given first place. This gave Judah prime importance. The prophetic significance of this zodiacal arrangement began with Judah and it also ended with

Judah since the “Camp” was a circle. The zodiacal story is a prophetic account that actually centers on the Messiah of Israel who was destined to come from the tribe of Judah. For this reason, Judah was reckoned as the chief tribe and it was located in Moses’ arrangement of the “Camp” directly east of the Temple.

The tribe of Judah had for its tribal symbol the Lion (called Leo today). Judah had a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides. As the chief tribe, Judah (Leo) and its sign was positioned to dominate the summer season in prophetic and calendar matters. It was positioned on the east side of the Temple and Jerusalem. Judah was given the fifth month Ab (called the Father month) as the month commencing (or “fathering”) the prophetic teaching that the twelve zodiacal signs provided in the circular design of the “Camp.” The sign of Leo was the start and end of the zodiacal year according to Moses. The twelve tribes in their arrangement in the encampment also represented the twelve months of the year.

The next pivotal tribe proceeding counterclockwise around this zodiacal design of this “Camp of Israel” (90 degrees to the right from Judah) was Dan with a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides. It was positioned on the north side of the Temple and Jerusalem as a venomous creature, sometimes displayed as an eagle with a snake in its talons (called Scorpio, the venomous scorpion today). It dominated the autumn season in the prophetic calendar of Israel.

Reuben (90 degrees to the right of Dan) with a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides was placed on the west side of the Temple and Jerusalem in the original arrangement. Reuben was connected with water, as a Man bearing water (called Aquarius today), and it dominated the winter season in the original prophetic calendar. In another (and later) arrangement of the tribes within this zodiacal pattern, Reuben changes places with Ephraim. This arrangement is that of Reuben in disgrace. This arrangement was to place Reuben in last place in the astronomical pattern to account for

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his sin of going up to his father's bed (Genesis 49:3,4). So, in this later arrangement Reuben was taken out of the section of the Hebrew Zodiac which had the Holy of Holies within its "slice" and that "slice" was given to Ephraim. Still, in the final arrangement as shown in the Book of Revelation, Reuben is shown in its original (and sinless) position (Revelation 4:7 see the next section on the Cherubim for more information on this interesting subject).

And finally there is Ephraim (90 degrees to the right of Reuben in the original arrangement before the sin of Reuben) with a subsidiary tribe of Israel located on each of its sides. He was on the south side of the Temple and Jerusalem as a bullock (called Taurus today). It was positioned to dominate the spring season in a prophetic and calendar sense. And, of course, if one continued to the right another 90 degrees, one would then return to Judah (Leo) for the start of another calendar or prophetic year.

### ***The Angelic Cherubim and Astronomy***

Another form of this astronomical arrangement surrounding the Temple and Jerusalem (and patterned after God's abode in heaven) was the four sides of the cherubim mentioned by Ezekiel (1:4-14) and the Book of Revelation (4:6,7). The cherubim were reckoned by the biblical writers as encompassing the throne of God in heaven. These angelic cherubim also had the four zodiacal signs representing the seasons of the year associated with them (Lion, Eagle, Man, Bullock which are today called Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius, Taurus and they were analogous to the four principal tribes of Israel: Judah, Dan, Reuben and Ephraim). These particular cherubim had prophetic significance regarding the seasons of the year in the Hebrew calendar, and these astronomical indications were reflected in the arrangement of the "Camp of Israel" in the wilderness. But it didn't stop with the encampment in the wilderness. This celestial order of the twelve tribes of Israel was also introduced in the time of Jesus to encompass the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. Jewish records are clear on this fact. The "Camp" was

patterned to represent God's abode and his official precincts surrounding his residence in heaven (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). So, even the external shape of the angelic cherubim as shown in the Old and New Testaments indicated the signs of the four seasons of the year and this was also duplicated in the symbolic astronomical (circular) design of the "Camp." Revelation 4:7 shows the Cherubim arranged with Reuben returned to its prestigious spot on the west side (the original arrangement before Reuben's sin) which had the Holy of Holies in the Temple within Reuben's zodiacal "slice."

### ***The Zodiacal Design and the Messiah***

While it should be remembered that the Bible condemns faulty interpretations by the so-called astrologers of this world (a profession which the prophets held in disdain), there are still clear astronomical signs given in the Bible for prophetic reasons in numerous places, and biblical interpreters should try to understand them.

In regard to the biblical indications involving celestial signs, let us note the prime astronomical illustration in the Holy Scriptures. That is the zodiacal design of the tribes of Israel within their encampment in the wilderness. Recall that the main entry gate for astronomical purposes that led into the camp of Israel while they were in the wilderness (and the same thing applied to Jerusalem in the time of Jesus) was the entrance from the *east*, through the tribe of Judah which had as its sign the Lion (or, as we say today, Leo). Indeed, the zodiacal interpretation for the twelve tribes began with the sign of Leo. This was also the case with the early Babylonian zodiac (*The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol.XII.51). This astronomical sign answered to the 5th Hebrew month Ab (the father month, or the beginning month for astronomical interpretation). The month of Ab was reckoned to be Judah's month, and all biblical astronomical significance in a prophetic sense started in the middle portion of Leo (in the time of Moses it began with Ab 15).

In fact, the design of the biblical Zodiac that the tribes of Israel

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displayed in their encampment prefigured the history of the Messiah of Israel as certainly interpreted by the early Christians. Its prophetic or chronological significance is all “*within* the camp,” not *outside* the camp. Note this important point. Jesus was born of Judah (Leo the Lion, the month of Ab) and the first sign in a counterclockwise direction that anyone *within* the camp would encounter would be Virgo, the Virgin (Elul, the 6th Hebrew month). And certainly, Jesus was accepted by Christians as being born of a virgin. Then, in the New Testament narrative, Jesus at the start of his ministry then met Satan for his temptation as shown by Dan (the sign of the venomous serpent or scorpion). He later came into deep waters (e.g. Psalm 124:4) through his apprehension, trial and crucifixion at Jerusalem (which is symbolized by Reuben, the sign of the Water Bearer a man carrying water). But then comes the Springtime (as indicated by the Joseph tribes, particularly Ephraim, Taurus the Bull) and this represented the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Finally, one returns in this circular (or celestial) journey *within* the camp to the first part of the tribe of Judah (Leo the Lion, back to the first fifteen degrees of the month of Ab) where the chief star called Regulus the King Star is located (which happens to be the closest star in the heavens to the ecliptic, the path of the Sun), and this represents the Christ being crowned King of Kings and sitting on the right hand of the Father, whom the Sun represents (Malachi 4:2).

The four cherubim which represent the four seasons (and the four principal tribes) are the primary actors in this zodiacal or celestial design of the fortunes of the Messiah *within* the Camp of Israel. It is reflected in the story found in Psalm 19 where the Sun comes forth as a bridegroom and begins to tell a prophetic history that Israel can understand. Indeed, the apostle Paul quoted Psalm 19 (Romans 10:18) and referred it to Jesus and his message as going forth like the messages in the sun, moon and stars into all the world. The early Christians saw the astronomical message found in the zodiacal arrangement of the tribes of Israel within their encamp-



ment as giving highlights of the career of Jesus in his role as the Christ of God. The celestial prophecy had nothing to do with directions of the compass around Jerusalem itself where these things would take place because the temptation by Satan was in the wilderness south and east of Jerusalem, not in the north where the tribe of Dan was positioned in the tribal pattern.

It is interesting, however, that Judah (the chief tribe) was located *east* of the Temple so that it would always be in front of God who viewed his people looking *eastward* from the Holy of Holies. People would *orient* themselves in matters of direction by using the *east* as their standard direction (and even today we use the word *orient* in the same way, though most of us now use north as the standard). All directions for geographical purposes in the Bible have their standard based on the *east* (the direction God looked toward from his Holy of Holies in the Temple). Indeed, even two Hebrew words were used for “south” (*yamin* and *teman*) and both signified “the right hand” (in this case it was “the right hand of God” sitting in the Holy of Holies). And one of the Hebrew words for *east* was *qedem* and this also had the meaning (in several contexts) of “being before” or standing “in front of” someone, notably being before God when He sat in His Sanctuary facing *east*. So, the tribe of Judah was situated directly *east* of God in the encampment of Israel. But, the astronomical standard begins with Judah and ends with Judah. It was expected that the Messiah himself would emerge from Judah. Thus, all the significant acts of Jesus in his role of Messiah in the capital city of Jerusalem (his crucifixion, his resurrection, his return to heaven, and his return from heaven, etc.) have their occurrences just “outside the camp” which was just opposite the *eastern* entrance to Judah.

### ***The Three Heavens and the Temple***

This astronomical arrangement of the Temple and “the Camp” is shown in another fashion that Jews took for granted in the time of Jesus. The Bible reveals that there are “three heavens.” There are

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numerous texts showing that the “first heaven” is the atmosphere where the birds fly and where all weather phenomena take place. The “second heaven” was beyond the earth’s atmosphere and embraced all the visible planets and stars, including the sun and the moon. The “third heaven,” that the apostle Paul referred to in II Corinthians 12:1-4 which he called Paradise, was that of God’s official residence in his heavenly region which was separate from the other two heavens.

These “three heavens” were symbolically pictured in the Temple at Jerusalem. In fact, the three main sections of the Temple were designed to show these three heavens. When an Israelite entered the main Temple from the east, he or she would first be within the Court of the Israelites. This first section of the Temple (which continued westward up to the eastern portion of the priests’ court in which was the Altar of Burnt Offering) was not covered with a roof. The first section was open to all weather phenomena and birds could fly within it. This area of the Temple answered in a typical manner with the “first heaven.” This “first heaven” is our atmosphere surrounding the earth. The “second heaven” in the Temple in a symbolic sense began at the eastern curtain in front of the Holy Place. This curtain, we are told by Josephus, had the principal stars of the heavens displayed on it in tapestry form (*War*, V.5,5 ¶213). It represented the entrance into the starry heavens (the “second heaven”) beyond our atmosphere. Josephus, the Jewish historian of the first century, tells us that west of this curtain, one could witness the center of the zodiacal circle with the seven planets displayed on the south side in the form of the Menorah (the seven lamps) with the twelve signs of the Zodiac denoting the twelve months displayed on the north side by the twelve loaves of the Table of Shewbread. This second court of the priests represented all the starry heavens above the earth’s atmosphere. But beyond this “second heaven,” there was yet a “third heaven.” This “third heaven” was the Heaven of Heavens, or in Temple terminology, the Holy of Holies which equaled God’s celestial abode where his palace and divine precincts

were located which the apostle Paul called Paradise.

### ***The Temple and Jerusalem Were Astronomical In Design***

With all of the astronomical features of the Temple, it is not difficult to understand why the shape of the “Camp of Israel” was reckoned to be circular, as astronomical designs are typically shown to be. In a word, the city of Jerusalem and the Camp area that surrounded it were symbolically accounted as being the physical and earthly counterpart (or pattern) of God’s heavenly headquarters from which he governed the entirety of the universe (Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). These astronomical features are what Moses was trying to reveal to the Israelites with the design of “the Camp” in the wilderness.

Now, I have taken considerable time to show the circular shape and the dimensions of “the Camp,” but this is a necessary geographical feature that is often overlooked by those who write about the Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. Indeed, this lack of understanding is one of the main reasons why the place of Jesus’ crucifixion has not been retained in peoples’ knowledge over the centuries. Had the true dimensions of “the Camp” been taken into consideration, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in the west and the Garden Tomb in the north would never have been thought to be legitimate places for the crucifixion of Jesus, because both sites are positioned *well inside* the official “Camp” at Jerusalem. The shape of the “Camp” at Jerusalem in the time of Jesus utterly forbids the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb area as being candidates for the site of Jesus’ crucifixion.

Thus, the shape and dimensions of the “Camp” that surrounded the Temple and Jerusalem is a major key that helps the modern reader to know the area where Jesus was crucified. Most people today, even theologians and other scholars, know very little about these essential features connected with the Jerusalem in the time of Jesus. For that reason, I have felt it necessary to provide this geo-

graphical information so that a person can understand the geographical significance of the various sacrifices that the early Christians associated in a typical way with the role of Jesus in the teaching of the Christian message.

What this geographical information provides is a certain fact that the crucifixion of Jesus had to occur at least 2000 cubits (3000 feet) *east* of the Holy Place in the Temple. This is why the events associated with Jesus in his role as the Messiah of Israel took place *east* of the Temple and the city of Jerusalem. It was recognized in the first century that the Messiah would indeed come from the *east* to Jerusalem and to the people of Israel (Matthew 24:27; Luke 17:24), and the Jewish authorities at the time reckoned that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem from the *east* because of the statement in Ezekiel that the Glory of God would come from the *east* (Ezekiel 43:1-4). This was the region of the “camp of Israel” that the tribe of Judah dominated and it was the direction toward which God looked out over Israel and the world from His divine position within the Temple. All Jews who lived in Jerusalem in the first century would have known that the indication mentioned in the Book of Hebrews about the sin offerings that were equated symbolically with Jesus and his crucifixion, were all performed *east* of the Temple. This is one of the main reasons why the crucifixion took place “without the camp” *east* of the Temple and on the Mount of Olives. There is even more to prove this.