

Easter tied to astronomy

Historians agree with the Christian faithfully that Easter seems to centre around the chronological Hebrew Passover. While there is no official agreed date on Christ's crucifixion, April 3, 33AD seems to be a popular consensus. In his 2007 movie, *The Star of Bethlehem*, Rick Larson attempts to merge current astronomy mapping technology with the Scriptures to try and prove this date. His hypothesis is compelling to say the least and the film is worth watching. However, the account of linking astronomy to the actually day is both long and complicated. Several dating methods have been used since the first Easter from the Constantine's Council of Nicea in 325 AD to the Julian calendar. The problem with the methods was the discrepancy between the solar and lunar years which could offset when Easter landed. Pope Gregory XIII eventually reformed the Julian calendar in 1582 and despite resistance from the Protestant churches, it eventually gained acceptance world-



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The Sky's the Limit

wide and is the method still used today.

Sky watch for the next month

The full moon rises next to Saturn on April 6 after sunset. Look southeast-east around 9 p.m., and Saturn will rise at the same time and latitude as the moon. It'll follow it all night long until it sets at sunrise in the southwest-west.

Venus will be at its brightest towards the end of the month. The planet will grow in brightness peaking at magnitude -4.7 (normally -4.5 to -3.7) on the evening of April 30. Look west after sunset and follow it until after it sets after midnight in the northwest.

On March 18, a new supernova exploded just below Mars. While the red planet is certainly visible

to the naked eye, this new formation at the time of writing is still not, but may well be shortly. The current magnitude is 13.3, which is about the equivalent of Pluto, but some supernovas can actually burn so bright that they can be seen during the day. Chinese and Arab astronomers (and even as far as Mexico) recorded that when the Crab Nebula (M1 or SN1054) in the constellation of Taurus, exploded July 4 (yes, it was the fourth of July) in 1054 AD. Nicknamed the "guest star", it was visible for 23 days during broad daylight and two years after that to the naked eye at night.

The Lyrids Meteor Shower, also known as April shooting stars, will occur late night on April 21 and peak at about 10 p.m. going well into the dawn of April 22. Look northeast into the constellation of Lyra, and you should be able to catch 10-20 meteors per hour on average with rare surges of up to 100.

Public events for the next month

Monthly public stargaz-

ing at the Trek Station takes place April 13 at 7:30 p.m. A short indoor presentation is followed by outdoor gazing with the telescope (weather pending). Come and see the brand new supernova "2012aw." For further information, contact Vulcan Tourism at 403-485-2994 or go to www.vulcantourism.com.

The Saturday Observer's Night is hosted by All Star Telescope (<http://www.all-star-telescope.com/>) just outside Didsbury, on April 28, starting at 8 p.m. and lasting until midnight. This full facility telescope dealer has a heated showroom and washrooms, and everything is provided at no charge. I am planning to attend, and you are welcome to caravan with a group I am assembling leaving Vulcan at about 4:30 p.m. weather permitting. We stop for a Chinese Buffet before heading to the celestial farm for the evening. For further information contact Ken From at 866-310-8844, or go to www.all-star-telescope.com/index.php/Observer-Nights.html.