

Mercury May Be Seen for Two Weeks Starting Today

By FAY VAN SCHOIACK

Would you like to see a member of the sun's family so elusive that few people have the pleasure of observing it? The planet, Mercury, name-sake of the swift messenger of the gods, will be visible in the twilight sky for about two weeks, beginning April 15.

Nearest to the sun of all the planets, Mercury's orbit is well within the sky-path traveled by the earth, and, as viewed by earth dwellers, appears to move quickly from one side of the sun to the other, although it is actually revolving around the sun in a nearly circular orbit. While this little world is near its most distant point on either side of the sun, it is visible to the naked eye for about two weeks.

Planet's Elongation

These points of greatest angular distance from the sun are called elongations. When the elongation of Mercury is east of the sun, the planet appears as a star in the evening sky, setting soon after the sun. At a western elongation, Mercury is a morning "star."

Ancient Egyptians, believing this planet to be two different stars, named it Horus when seen in the evening and Set when seen as a morning "star." The Greeks called it Mercury and Apollo, but retained the name, Mercury, when they recognized that it was one planet instead of two.

How does Mercury compare to the planet on which we live? In size, it is much smaller, having a diameter of about 3,000 miles, while it is approximately 8,000 miles through the earth. A year on Mercury is 88 of our days and astronomers believe that it turns only once on its axis during this time, thereby keeping the same side always toward the sun. The surface temperature of its sunny side is 770 degrees F., which is hot enough to melt lead. The other side is perpetually frozen. There is no atmosphere. Life, as it exists on earth would be impossible on Mercury.

Eclipse of Sun

"If Mercury is between the earth and the sun, why doesn't this planet sometimes cause an eclipse of the sun just as the moon does?" students often inquire.

Mercury is so small and far distant that it can not possibly obscure the light of the sun. About 13 times in every 100 years, as Mercury moves in its orbit, the tiny planet travels directly across the path of the sun. This is called a transit and only through the telescope can a black dot be seen moving across the face of the sun. A transit will occur in May, 1957.

Mercury, son of Jupiter, king of the mythical gods, was able to climb from his cradle and seek adventure on the very day of his birth. Killing a tortoise, he made the first lyre out of its shell. Then for pure mischief, drove away and hid 50 cattle belonging to his brother, the sun god, Apollo. Returning to his cradle he snuggled down in the swaddling clothes.

Young, innocent "I am too young and innocent to have hidden the cattle," he pleaded, when the angry Apollo appeared. Jupiter, to whom the matter was then brought, said, "You must show Apollo where his cattle are."

After the animals were returned to the royal pasture, Apollo presented Mercury with a golden staff and Jupiter commanded him to be lord over all birds of omen, as well as lions,

boars, dogs, and all flocks. Jupiter also made Mercury the official messenger for the gods, and gave him the power to lead the souls of the departed mortals to the dark realm of Pluto.

To find this little planet, look to the west after sun down. It will be lower in the sky and farther north than Venus which reached its point of greatest brilliance April 12. Mercury can only be seen in the twilight and so appears rather dull though it is brighter than a first magnitude star.

On the evening of April 15, it sets within an hour after the sun but each evening for the following two weeks remains visible a little longer though its brightness gradually fades. By looking sharply and using patience, the little messenger of the gods may be seen winging his way through the western twilight, provided the skies are clear.

Dr. J. H. Ballard To Hold Series of Lectures Here Soon

Dr. J. Hudson Ballard, an authority on psychology, will give a series of lectures in Medford starting Sunday, April 29, at the First Presbyterian church.

Dr. Ballard was pastor of Presbyterian churches in Portland from 1934 to 1941, and was principal of a private high school and junior college in New York. For eight years he was head of the department of philosophy and religion at Occidental college in Los Angeles.

He is now emeritus professor of pastoral psychology at the San Francisco Theological seminary, after being head of the department for 11 years.

Regular Column

Dr. Ballard conducted a regular column of psychological problems in the Christian Advocate (Methodist) for several years.

He holds a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Southern California, master of arts from Columbia university, master of pedagogy and doctor of philosophy from New York university, bachelor of divinity from Union Theological seminary, New York, and doctor of divinity from Occidental college.

Dr. Ballard is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and the American Philosophical association.

His lectures here will include "God Curing Discouragement," Sunday, April 29, at 9:45 and 11 a.m.; "Toward Overcoming Worry," 8 p.m., April 29; "How Deep is the Mind," 8 p.m., April 30; "Mental Conflicts," 8 p.m., May 1; "Controlling Our Emotions," 8 p.m., May 2; and "Temperament in Daily Life," 8 p.m., May 3.

The lectures are open to the public.

Lone Pine PTA to Have Kindergarten

Lone Pine Parent-Teachers association has announced that it will sponsor a kindergarten April 16-May 25 for children of the district who will be entering the first grade next fall.

Hours for the kindergarten will be 9-11 a.m. Parents with children in this age group may bring them to the Lone Pine school the morning of April 16.

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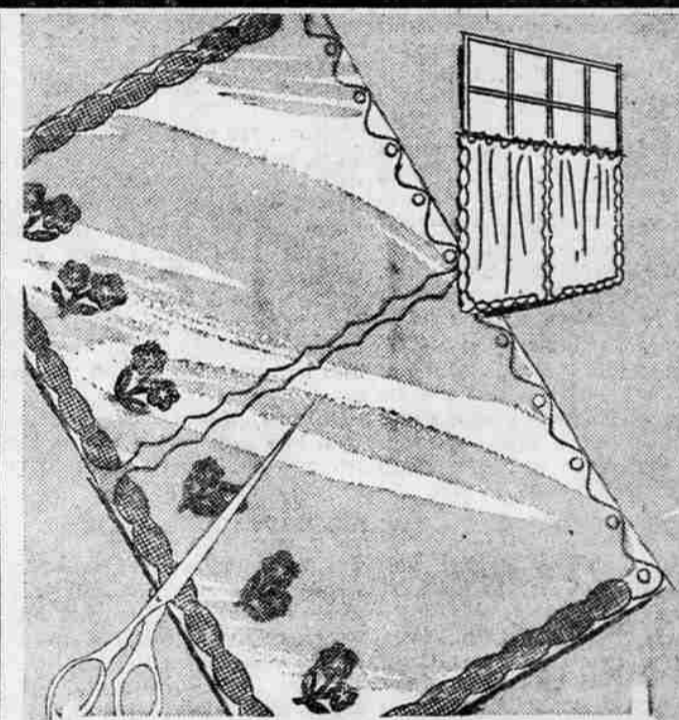


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