

THE SKY THIS MONTH

NOVEMBER 2008

THE MOON, JUPITER AND VENUS

It is always fun to see several bright objects in the same vicinity of the sky. This November contains another example of how the heavens entertain us!

The fun begins at 5:30 p.m. on November 5th. A lovely half Moon will be seen at due south. If you look to the Moon's right (to the southwest) you will inevitably see Jupiter blazing at about 20 degrees above the southwestern horizon.

Keep going! Look low in the west-southwestern sky and you should see what looks like a very bright blazing star. You just found Venus!

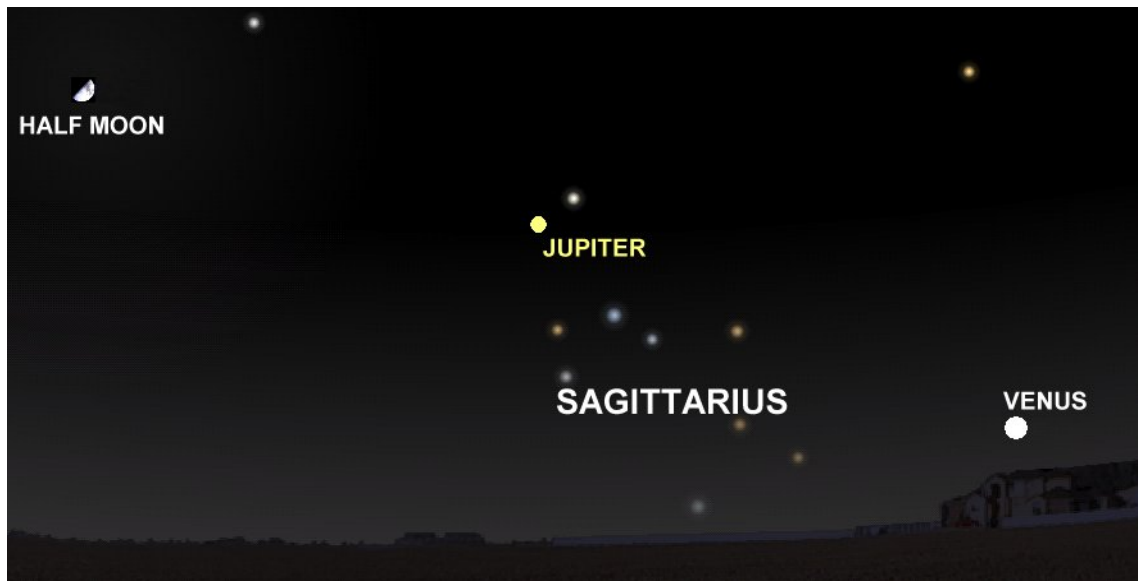


Figure 1: The Moon, Jupiter and Venus at 5:30 p.m. November 5th, 2008. Image by Software Bisque's TheSky Version 6.

Keep a close eye on Jupiter and Venus over the month of November. You might notice that they will appear to get closer together with each passing day. This will become more apparent in the latter half of November, as the two get within 20 degrees of each other. You will be seeing Earth and Venus moving in

their orbits. Jupiter is also moving, but at a much slower speed than its counterparts.

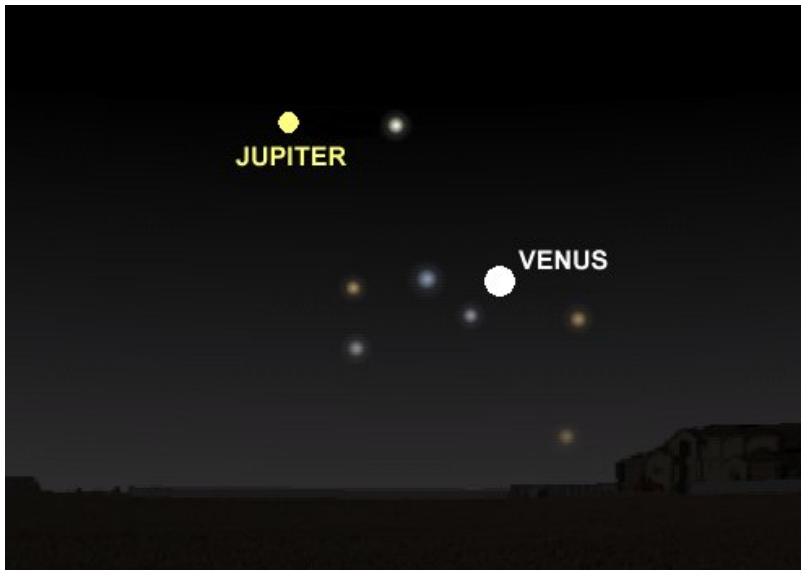


Figure 2: Jupiter and Venus at 5 p.m. November 20th, 2008. Image by Software Bisque's TheSky Version 6.

The highlight takes place on November 30th and December 1st. At 5 p.m. November 30th, Venus and Jupiter can be seen a mere 2 degrees apart. A crescent Moon can also be seen very low in the southwestern sky.

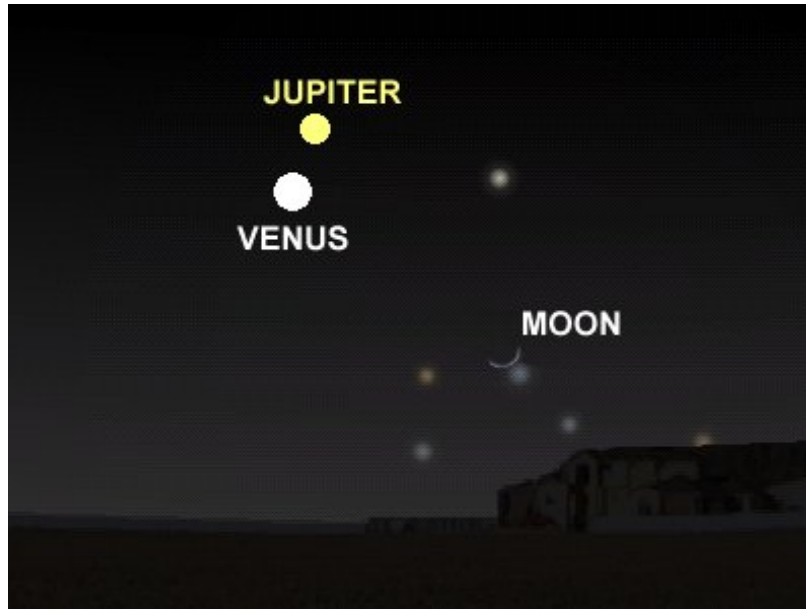


Figure 3: The Moon, Jupiter and Venus at 5 p.m. November 30th, 2008. Image by Software Bisque's TheSky Version 6.

At 5 p.m. December 1st, Venus and Jupiter are just as close, but they will also make a lovely triplet with the crescent Moon.

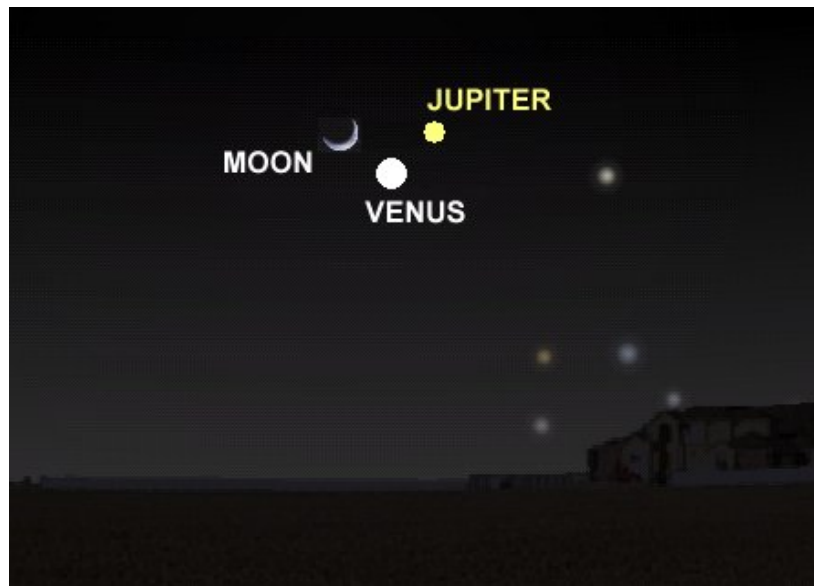


Figure 4: The Moon, Jupiter and Venus at 5 p.m. December 1st, 2008. Image generated by Software Bisque's TheSky Version 6.

“Wait a minute”, you might say! Isn't Venus' orbit inside the Earth's and Jupiter's orbit outside the Earth's! How then can Venus and Jupiter be seen in the same part of the sky? The answer is illustrated in Figures 5 and 6 below.

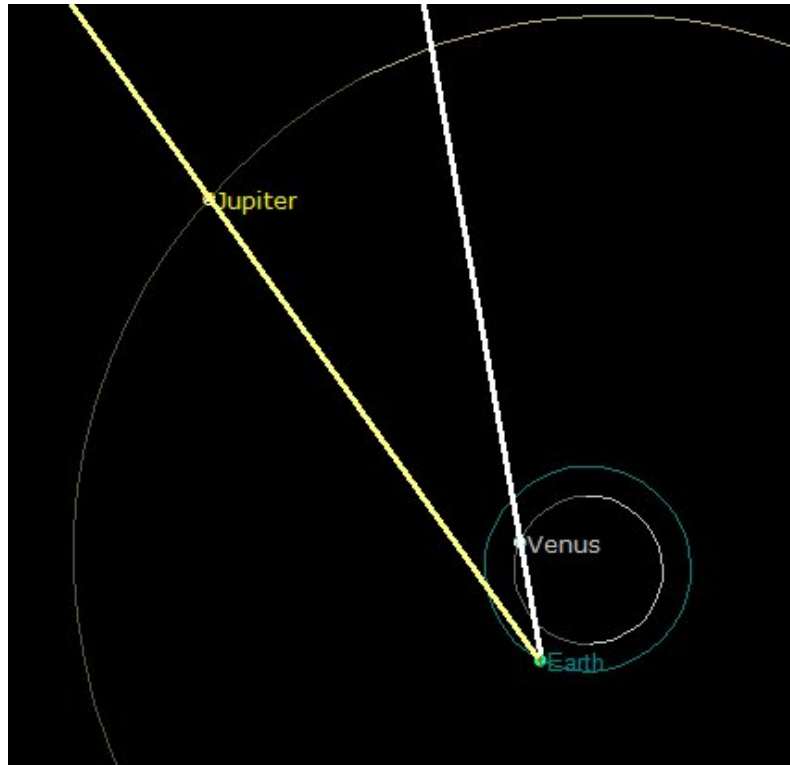


Figure 5: Jupiter and Venus as seen from Earth on November 5th, 2008. The apparent angle that we see between the two is illustrated. Image by Software Bisque's TheSky Version 6.

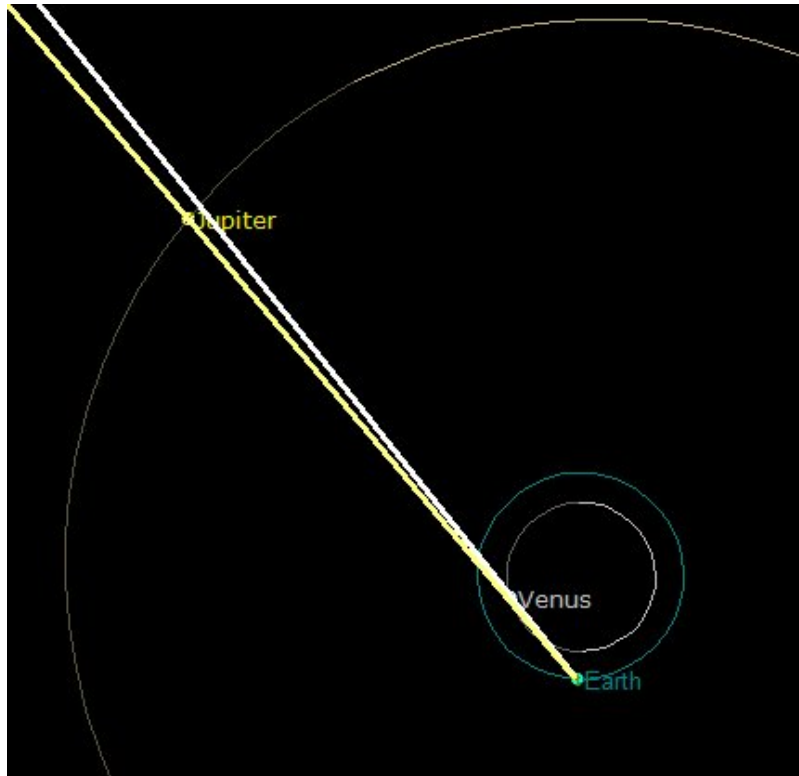


Figure 6: Jupiter and Venus as seen from Earth on November 30th, 2008. The small apparent angle that we see between the two is illustrated. Note how Earth and Venus have moved since November 1st, but Jupiter remains in nearly the same position in its orbit. Image by Software Bisque's TheSky Version 6.

The orbits of Earth, Venus and Jupiter are nearly in the same plane; the plane of our Solar System. You can trace out part of our Solar System's plane by drawing an imaginary line between the Moon, Jupiter and Venus on the early evening of November 5th.

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