## **February Planet Parade**

You likely have seen social media promoting an alignment of planets. The term alignment is a bit misleading. The four naked eye planets are all visible in the evening sky. However, they are spread across a long arc from SW to East. You don't need dark sky or special instruments to Saturn, Venus, Jupiter and Mars. They will be visible any clear night until late February but will shift further toward the west as the month progresses.

The image below shows the sky around 7:00 PM on Feb. 4th. It shows the four planets along with the moon strung out along the ecliptic shown here in yellow. The ecliptic is the path of the sun among the stars. The moon and planets travel near the ecliptic. The constellations of the ecliptic are more commonly known as the Zodiac constellation. The smaller images below it shows the moon near Venus Feb. 1, near Jupiter on Feb. 6 and Mars on Feb 9th.

Starting in the SW you will see brilliant **Venus** soon after sunset. **Saturn** is the fairly bright star below Venus. However, you'll have to wait awhile for the sky to get darker. While you wait look high it the SE east sky for the bright planet **Jupiter**. The star clusters of Taurus are nearby. Finally look to the east for bright reddish **Mars** near the Gemini stars Pollux and Castor. The telescopic planets Neptune and Uranus are also in the sky.



