

## **Naked Bible Podcast Transcript**

### **Episode 178**

### **Why the World Didn't End on September 23**

**September 23, 2017**

**Teacher: Dr. Michael S. Heiser (MH)**

**Host: Trey Stricklin (TS)**

September 23 has come and gone. The world didn't end. Jesus didn't return. There was no rapture. Planet X (Nibiru) never showed up. Why not? The answers involve both astronomy and sound biblical interpretation. We'll leave the astronomy to experts in that field. We'll consider the biblical reasons why the September 23 prophetic date-setting was nonsense. Those reasons are actually transparent, at least if we care about paying attention to the biblical text. In this episode of the podcast, we talk about five features of the passages used by false teachers who promoted Sept 23 as having end-times meaning. Join us for an episode on how to ineptly interpret the Bible.

## **Transcript**

**TS:** Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 178: Why the World Didn't End on September 23. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike... it's almost over! It's the end! This is the end... [singing]

**MH:** Almost, almost. Yeah, you're probably hoping that because your Fantasy team took a dive last week.

**TS:** Yes, Mike. People are getting so tired of us talking about Fantasy that we don't need to talk about it this week.

**MH:** You're now in fourth place! How did that happen?

**TS:** We don't need to talk about it. People are tired of it, Mike.

**MH:** Who's in first place now?

**TS:** That is...

**MH:** The Pugnacious Pugs!

**TS:** Oh my goodness.

**MH:** They are ruling the league.

**TS:** You have taken over the reign.

**MH:** I know why you want it to end, but it ain't gonna. It's not gonna end. Your misery is going to continue.

**TS:** We shall see, my friend, we shall see. [Laughter] Long way to go!

**MH:** Yeah, long way to go.

But no, the world is not going to end on September 23, and we are so confident of it that we are doing this episode before that time gets here. We're not going to be like the... I'll just go ahead and say it: the false teachers that are putting dates out there, and then after the fact they've got to improvise. We don't need to improvise here. The world is not going to end on September 23. The Lord is not going to return on September 23. And I will also add that the Tribulation period is not going to begin on September 23. See, that's the newest one, where we can say stuff like that and then nobody can figure out that we're wrong until seven years later. That's sort of clever, although I might prefer a word like "devious" with all of the connotations that go therewith.

But yeah—we need to talk about this. It's coming up a lot in pop culture. I've mentioned it before, both on the podcast and the livestream. If you don't know, we've started a livestream that's just sort of a chit-chat thing. My son and I try to do it Friday nights, so follow me on Twitter or Facebook for those announcements of when that is ready to go. It's usually 7 p.m. Pacific. We've talked about it on there, as well. But we wanted to dedicate an episode to it because you ought to have some place where you can go for a brief survey of why this is nonsense. There's really two categories of reasons. Since this is the Naked Bible Podcast, we're going to be dealing with the biblical reasons. This is getting linked online not only with the astronomy stuff in Revelation 12, but it's also getting linked to Wormwood and getting linked to Planet X (which is Nibiru) and the Ancient Astronaut mythology that's getting "Christianized" or "baptized" to make it sound biblical. You're getting all of these things together.

The other category of analysis here would be astronomy. We're not going to do that because we're not astronomers, but I happen to know an astronomer who blogs about this regularly. This is Stuart Robbins on the Pseudoastronomy Podcast. Stuart's PhD is actually in geology—specifically Martian geology—but that requires a lot of astronomy background, naturally, because it's Mars. Stuart has done a whole series on Planet X myths—looking at them from the perspective of mostly science. I say "mostly" because I've actually been a guest on his podcast twice and we've talked about things like Ancient Astronaut theory

5:00

with Zechariah Sitchin, who was really the point of origin, at least for the Nibiru stuff, which gloms onto Planet X and what-not. We're going to put a link on the episode page for this episode to Stuart's archive. This link will go to a page of my blog and there will be links there to individual episodes on Stuart's archive, where he covers the scientific reasons why the return of Planet X and Nibiru stuff is just nonsense. So you'll get that if you're interested. Hopefully some of the people promoting this idea and baptizing it (making the sign of the cross over it) will also go up and listen and read, as well (Stuart has links on his episode pages) and just repent of the nonsense and move on from there.

For our purposes here, we're going to talk about the biblical reasons as to why this is just silliness. I say "silliness" because it's easy to laugh at it and poke fun at it. Just this past week we saw the *Huffington Post*... I don't know how much effort it took them or how much time they put into finding the dumbest articulation of this idea, but they managed to: someone named David Meade who talks about *elohim* showing up 33 times in the Bible... Like, does he know what a concordance is? I mean, it's a few thousand, David! You're only off by a few thousand!

So here you have the *Huffington Post* pick this idea up, and they have a very, very wide circulation. Once again, we get Christian silliness that makes it easy for non-Christians to consider the Bible and the gospel ridiculous. So it's not just silly, it's actually serious. And again, they look for the ones that are the most absurd—the most absurd examples. You say, "Well, not everybody is that dumb, Mike! There are some really smart people saying this, too." Yeah, they're wrong as well. They might be wrong for different reasons, but they're going to get lumped into the really, really, really dumb articulations of Bible prophecy, what the Bible says, and biblical theology. It really makes it hard for those of us who are trying to do serious work and have it matter for the pop culture—the wider Church. If you're familiar with my Christian Middle Earth analogy, I'm talking about the bottom realm—the one that's the biggest. It really makes it hard to combat all that with good content. And even worse, when scholars see this kind of stuff and they see what really happens online and the absurdity and the nonsense and what Christians who profess to be interested in Bible study are really saying and thinking about and buying into, it just discourages them from getting involved. They don't want their content used in such terrible ways. They don't want to be associated in any way, even if they're trying to combat the nonsense and false teaching. It's just not a good thing across the board.

But I wanted to do an episode where we at least do a survey. This is not going to be terribly deep because, frankly, the reasons why this is just absurd should be pretty evident—in some cases self-evident. But I'm just going to go through a few reasons. I have five of them—why the world did not end and why Jesus didn't return on September 23, and why those who claim these things are false teachers at best, or they might even know better and still be doing it. They're doing things for their ego, for an audience, for money, what-not. At best, they're

inept in terms of their approach to Scripture and what they're doing with Scripture. In either case, they shouldn't be doing what they're doing, and you shouldn't be following them. You shouldn't be giving them any attention. They can be safely ignored. If you're listening to this podcast, chances are really good that you're already ignoring that, but you have friends and people in your family, and those are the people you can reach and try to take their interest in the Bible and direct it to better content.

So let's go through five topical statements and work our way through the list of five reason for why the world didn't end on September 23.

### **1. Revelation 12 is about a past event, not a future event.**

In other words, Revelation 12 predicts nothing. It's about a past event, not a future event. The people who are peddling the September 23 thing are tying this in to the fact that the astronomical items mentioned in Revelation 12... You have the virgin woman with the twelve stars around her head—the constellation Virgo with the sun in her midst and the moon at her feet, that sort of thing. You get things that aren't mentioned in Revelation 12 that are factoring into this. But the things that I and others have talked about in hindsight, if we take Revelation 12 as astronomical signage in association with the star of Bethlehem. The star of Bethlehem is actually part of this, especial if (as most astronomers would agree) the star of Bethlehem was Jupiter in its retrograde motion. If you plot out what Revelation 12 is describing and you take it as if John is actually looking up at the sky or that he knows enough esoteric astronomy or has heard the tradition or whatever (we don't necessarily know how John got the material, but it's there), you get a whole set of astronomical signs. And then there are things happening in the sky in conjunction with what's actually mentioned that matter for the birth narrative in Matthew 2—namely Jupiter in its retrograde motion.

I'm not going to go into all the details of that; you can find a little discussion of mine in a number of places (YouTube, whatever). That's legit. It's hindsight, though. And it's also not a fulfillment of any biblical prophecy in the Old Testament. It's just something that we can note after the fact that takes on significance when it produces a date—September 11, 3 B.C. For those who might be listening to this for the first time and you think, "Oh, that can't be because Herod died in 4 B.C." *Au contraire*. That is the dominant opinion in New Testament scholarship, and it's also one of the most unexamined things in New Testament scholarship. There are a number of scholars who have shown that the 4 B.C. date for the death of Herod does not work, and not only doesn't it work but it interferes with other things in biblical chronology. You can go to [www.drmsb.com](http://www.drmsb.com) and put in "September 11" or the "star of Bethlehem" or something like that, and you're going to find my post where I list some articles that you can get. You can actually get the articles, one of which is at least pretty hard to find (the one by Ormond Edwards on Herodian coins and how that affects chronology—specifically this point of chronology). You can get that by

subscribing to my newsletter. The other one you can get, as well. I need to add a third one. This is far, far from being an axiomatic, unassailable point in New Testament scholarship. It is not that at all. It's just that nobody bothers. Nobody cares about the chronology. It's been repeated so often that Herod died in 4 B.C. that nobody looks. Well, there are people who have looked and there are some serious problems with it. So if you take the September 11, 3 B.C. date, that happens to be Tishri 1. This date factors into all sorts of Jewish traditions. There's other material that I discuss in my lectures—the work of Ellen Robbins at Johns Hopkins regarding how the flood events, Noah, the Watchers—all this kind of stuff—factored into the Tishri 1 date and the chronology. All these things are mixed. They're all part of the matrix, and I discuss these things in *Reversing Hermon*. If you want that, you can go look it up there.

For our purposes here, if you look at what's going on in Revelation 12, you treat it that way—in hindsight. There is no Old Testament prophecy that spells any of this out, it's just something you see in hindsight that marries in real interesting ways with Jewish tradition and their thoughts about messiah. Then the assumption has become, for some, "Well, if it had this relationship to the First Coming, then surely it tells us something about the Second Coming!" Well, it doesn't. Because if you read Revelation 12, it doesn't predict anything. It's hindsight, not foresight. People say, "Well, it's in the book of Revelation, Mike, and Revelation is about the future! It can't be about the past if it's in the book of Revelation!" I've got news for you: the book of Revelation refers to past events. There's no law that says it can't, and in this case, it clearly does. I'm going to read the passage.

This is so self-evident that I can't even imagine why this is an issue. We're going to talk in this episode about why it is. Throughout the episode, you should be saying to yourself, "Good grief, that's bad interpretation." And it is. It is, but that doesn't stop people from doing it. Here's Revelation 12:1-6, just to get it fixed in somebody's head who might be new to this information:

15:00

**And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. <sup>2</sup> She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. <sup>3</sup> And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. <sup>4</sup> His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. <sup>5</sup> She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, <sup>6</sup> and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.**

That's Revelation 12:1-6. It's crystal-clear that this is the birth of the messiah.

**<sup>5</sup> She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron...**

That is a quotation right out of Psalms. It's a messianic Psalm. Ruling the nations with a rod of iron—this is very familiar. If this was Christmas time we would be able to pick that out because you hear it in songs all the time. This is clearly, clearly a past event because we know Jesus was born. It has nothing predictive about it. Revelation 12 was about the past, not the future. Even the rest of verse 5:

**...her child was caught up to God and to his throne...**

It's a reference to the resurrection and, more specifically, the ascension, where Christ ascended to the right hand of God—the throne of power, the place of power. Verse 5 encapsulates the mission of the messiah: he's born as a man, he's the messiah so his destiny is to rule the nations. He rises from the dead, he ascends to the Father, and he sits down, as scripture says half a dozen times. Look up "the right hand of God" in the New Testament. He sits down in the place of rulership, inaugurating the kingly rule—inaugurating the Kingdom. Now, the Kingdom hasn't reached its full consummation yet (we all know that), but this is what the New Testament describes. Jesus rose from the dead, he sat down at the right hand of God. This is clearly, *clearly* Jesus. And by the way, if Revelation 12 is predicting something in the future, then it would be contradicting the stuff that's already said in the New Testament, because Christ is already seated—he's *already seated*—at the right hand of God. So it's not future, it's past! Anyone, I would think, that has a modicum of New Testament knowledge should be able to read this and understand it clearly. But in this day and age, I guess that's asking a lot. You say, "Well, what about verse 6?"

**<sup>6</sup> and the woman fled into the wilderness...**

And you say, "Well, who's the woman? Mary? Mary didn't..." No, it's not Mary. Of course Mary didn't flee to the wilderness. The woman is Israel. Israel births the messiah. Israel is the bride of God in the Old Testament. Israel is the one who would produce the messianic child. He is a descendant of Abraham. The imagery is crystal clear if you know a little bit of your Old Testament.

So Israel, after Christ is risen and ascended, gets persecuted—flees into the wilderness. This is a picture of the persecution of the Jews, which we know happened from the book of Acts. There is a Jewish persecution and an early Christian persecution in the Jerusalem church. So she flees there. She gets



away under persecution. If we keep reading in the book of Revelation... let's just go beyond verse 6. So after the woman flees into the wilderness (we'll get back to the 1260 days in a moment here):

**<sup>7</sup> Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, <sup>8</sup> but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. <sup>9</sup> And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

This happens after, or I would say even more pointedly, in *conjunction with* the inauguration of the Kingdom. So when Jesus rises from the dead and has victory over the powers of darkness and sits down at the right hand of God, that's basically the beginning of the end for the dragon and those who are with him. That's what Revelation 12:7 and onward are describing. This is not describing a primeval rebellion of a third of the angels before the creation of humankind in between Genesis 1:1-2 (the Gap Theory). There is nothing of the sort in this passage to support any of that. By the way, this is the only place in the Bible (and it's the last book of the Bible, by the way) where a third of the angels are mentioned. The idea of a primeval rebellion of Satan and the angels before creation or in between Genesis 1:1-2 is a myth. It has no scriptural basis at all. You can prove that and establish it by using a concordance. It ain't hard.

So the dragon gets thrown down. And John says in verse 10:

**<sup>10</sup> And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come...**

So verse 10 validates the explanation I'm giving you. Does anybody read on through verse 10?

20:00

**...the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. <sup>11</sup> And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death. <sup>12</sup> Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!”**

**<sup>13</sup> And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. <sup>14</sup> But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.**

What's happening here is from verses 7 on (right now I'm at the end of verse 14), you have the flight of the woman under persecution (which was verse 6) repeated with more detail in verses 7-14. It's the same episode. It's like verse 6 is an earthly reference because the birth happens on earth and then Israel has to flee under persecution. Verses 7-14 are sort of the perspective from heaven. There's a war in heaven in conjunction with the events of the messiah because his coming, resurrection, and ascension bring forth the Kingdom. You have something alluded to in Luke:

**<sup>18</sup> And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven..."**

I've said it in the past that this is in conjunction (because it is—just read the Gospels) with the beginning of his preaching about the Kingdom of God. So what Jesus is saying in Luke 10 is that the Kingdom of God is commensurate with the defeat of Satan. Satan no longer can accuse believers. He no longer has a claim on their souls. As it says here in Revelation 12, the accuser doesn't have a case anymore:

**<sup>10</sup> ...for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.**

He has no authority any more. So what Jesus comments on when he begins preaching about the Kingdom is proleptic. It foreshadows what is going to happen. When does it happen? Here's the key point: *When does all this happen?* When Christ ascends and takes his seat at the right hand of God. Throughout the New Testament, that is when the Kingdom begins. It's not when the Kingdom reaches its full form, it's when the Kingdom begins. The Kingdom is here. If it's not here, then Christ is ruling over nothing or he isn't ruling at all, and the New Testament has him ruling in many places. So you either accept the language in the New Testament or you don't, or you make something up in its place. And that's pretty much what some of these people are doing.

So Israel gets persecuted, and if we keep reading here, we see that it actually expands:



**<sup>15</sup> The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.**

It's imagery about trying to kill the woman, devour the woman, drown the woman... whatever.

**<sup>16</sup> But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth. <sup>17</sup> Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring...**

That's an interesting line. Who are the rest of her offspring? Who are the rest of Israel's offspring?

**...on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.**

It's also a reference to the Church. The Church begins with Jewish converts. This is New Testament History 101. Revelation 12 is chronicling stuff that had happened and stuff that was happening in their day. You say, "What about the 1260 days?" Well, surprise, surprise. I have a quote here from David Aune in his Revelation commentary. He quotes several sources for this. But you can just go look it up in the history books and do the math. He says:

In the present context it is relevant that almost exactly three and one-half years elapsed between the beginning of the first Jewish revolt (fall of A.D. 66) and the siege of Jerusalem.

So there you've got your 1260 days—the Jews under persecution. It lasts for 3.5 years and they get destroyed. You say, "Well, how can that be an escape, then?" Weren't you paying attention when we read through Revelation 12 here? I'll read the line again in verse 11:

**<sup>11</sup> And they [believers] have conquered him [the dragon] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.**

The escape of the people of God is not earthly-oriented. It is ultimately heavenly. They escape because the accuser of the brethren has been cast down. They have eternal life. That's their escape. So Revelation 12 doesn't say that nobody died. Lots of people died. And that's what played out in history. This is a historical reckoning.

25:00

I would add that you're going to have people in the audience that say, "Yay, yay! This is preterism! Yay, hooray, hoopla!" This actually doesn't say a thing about preterism in principle because Revelation 12 doesn't predict anything. It doesn't really comment on the rest of the Preterist system. You can still have Revelation 12 look back at an event. (It looks back on the messiah's birth, after all.) You can have Revelation 12 looking back in time, but that doesn't mean that it legitimizes a system that says everything in Revelation is back in time. That would be over-reading Revelation 12 in a different way than the September 23 futurist people over-read it. We have a persecution following the resurrection. By the time Revelation gets written either before 70 or in the 90's (and I take the 90's view), either way that's history—that's past. It's either past or it's happening right then. It's not about the future. To use one passage in Revelation and say that's referencing a past or present event, and therefore we should read everything in Revelation that way makes you guilty of over-reading a passage and imposing it on the entire book in a different way than those who over-read the futurist position. So be careful! We need to have consistent hermeneutics here. Making the context of one passage be the context of everything else is not really good method, to be brief about it.

Let's just comment on "wings of eagles" and a few other things here. "Wings of eagles... that must mean helicopters! That's like an airlift. I'll bet that's the airlift out of Ethiopia because the Jews are coming back to Israel and now we've got an airlift and we get the Falashas out of Ethiopia and we bring them to the Land and..." [big sigh] I'm sorry. It's not helicopters. It's not an airlift. It's Old Testament. It's a reference back to the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 19:4). Remember where Israel was delivered from Egypt? They're using a deliverance image to describe the deliverance of Israel here (the woman who is fleeing).

**<sup>4</sup> 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.**

"Well, maybe God used helicopters back there in ancient Egypt!" Okay, please. Please.

You get the same image in Deuteronomy 32:11. God is being cast as an eagle that protects its young.

**<sup>11</sup> Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,  
that flutters over its young,  
spreading out its wings, catching them,  
bearing them on its pinions,  
<sup>12</sup> the LORD alone guided him [the nation],  
no foreign god was with him.**

The familiar Isaiah 40:31... This is Isaiah 40, talking about the deliverance from the exile in the Old Testament context:

<sup>31</sup> **but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;  
they shall run and not be weary;  
they shall walk and not faint.**

It's about divine deliverance. It's not about helicopters. Now Revelation 12:11, again, makes it clear that this isn't as if nobody dies. The whole passage really pivots on the birth of the messiah (past event), the resurrection and ascension of the messiah (past event), the persecution of the Jews at the time shortly after the resurrection and ascension, and the persecution of the early Church (past events). But the Kingdom in verses 7-14 or so transcends earth. When it reaches its final consummation, it will return to earth in a new global Eden. If you've read *Unseen Realm*, I spent a lot of time on that. The Kingdom of God that exists now in a spiritual sense will return to earth. It'll do that. That's what the Bible says. It will do that. We will have a final outcome where the nations will be returned and reclaimed, we will rule over the nations with the rod of iron. We get the Morning Star, we displace angels, we rule over angels—all that stuff in *Unseen Realm*. All of that is the case. But in Revelation 12, the emphasis is that you've got stuff happening on earth, so let's take the heavenly view. People are going to die on earth. It's a terrible time. But let's take the heavenly view, which is that the accuser of the brethren can accuse no more.

Here's what all that means: If you are a member of the Kingdom of God, you will have eternal life. The one who owned your soul because of the Fall—the one who gets to accuse believers, assert his ownership, point out their sin and their estrangement from God—that's over. That's done with. It's a past fact. Colossians 1:13 says:

30:00

<sup>13</sup> **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

If we have been delivered into the kingdom of his dear son, that is a past event. The Kingdom is here already, but it's not yet here in its fullness. This is basic New Testament theology that is summarily ignored by the people who promote the world ending on September 23. Again, our first point is that Revelation 12 is past. It's about the past, it's not about the future. There isn't a whiff—not a whiff—of prediction in Revelation 12.

## **2. There is no other New Testament Support for the idea.**

Not only do we have that not going for the September 23 theorists, but there's no other passage in the New Testament that cites or alludes to the signs of Revelation 12, with respect to the Second Coming or the end of the age. There is no other passage that references it. There is no other mention of a virgin with twelve stars. There's no other mention of the moon at her feet, the sun at her midst. There's no passage that says in any way, "Hey you, reading the Bible! You might want to study the Star of Bethlehem to learn about the Second Coming—not the First but the Second Coming. You got that?" There's no passage that says that. There is no other reference to birth astronomy anywhere in the New Testament, except Matthew 2 and Revelation 12. And Matthew 2 doesn't say, "Hey, the second time that this guy shows up—that Revelation 12 thing—that's what that's about." There's *nothing*... there's just no textual support for this idea. There's nothing in scripture that tells us that Revelation 12, which is clearly past... Birth of the messiah—I would suggest that's in the past. Resurrection and ascension—that's in the past. There's no other verse outside of Revelation 12 that tells us to read Revelation 12 as a future thing. There just isn't. Again, I don't write the material. I can read it and I can study it, and so can you. You will find that what I'm telling you here is completely correct.

## **3. The phony September 23 prophecy cites the astronomical signs generally associated with end-times in the Bible haphazardly and selectively.**

In other words, they cheat. Or they're inept. You've got one or the other. Neither choice is really flattering, but it's one or the other. Some say Revelation 12 is the sign of the beginning of the Tribulation. But where's the verse that associates Revelation 12's signs with the beginning of the Tribulation or the Tribulation period at all? "Well, it's that persecution stuff!" Oh, really? Let me go back to Revelation 12. We've got the birth of the messiah—check. Do we know that happened? Yep. Check. Do we know that was in the past? Check. Okay, so if that marked the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation, then why are we still here? Shouldn't the Lord have returned seven years later? Revelation 12:6 and what follows is not about the Tribulation period. Again, I'm speaking to people who adopt that system. Just think about it a little bit! Where is the verse, as well, that associates *any* signs in the sky—catch this—with the beginning of the Tribulation *at all*? "Well, there's those passages about the sun being darkened and the moon being darkened and the blood moons and all that stuff!" Well, if you actually read those passages, they come from somewhere! All of those things come from somewhere, and that somewhere would be the Old Testament—that thing that's three-quarters of your Bible. If you go back and look at the Old Testament, do you know what they're associated with? The Day of the Lord!

35:00

If you're a standard Pre-trib, Pre-mil eschatological person and you have a Pre-trib rapture... even if you don't have a Pre-trib rapture. If you believe there's a Tribulation period of seven years and then we have the Second Coming (wherever you put the rapture doesn't matter) at the end of the seven-year period... well, guess what? All of the celestial signs mark the *end* because the *end* of the seven-year Tribulation period is when the Day of the Lord happens. This is when everything just blows up. This is when you get Armageddon. This is when you get the judgment of the nations. This is when you get the vindication of the righteous and the return of the Lord with the holy ones, which includes believers. This is when you get that stuff. The Day of the Lord is when everything wrong is made right and everything that was right to begin with is vindicated. Again, it's just a little basic Day of the Lord theology. All of it would be at the *end* of the Tribulation—not the beginning. There isn't a single verse that puts these signs at the *beginning* of the Tribulation. To put it another way, there's no verse that puts these signs seven years prior to the Day of the Lord. There just isn't! You could just look the signs up and look at the verses—read the verses. When you're reading your Bible, look at the little footnotes (letter 1, 2, a, b, whatever) and they will direct you to cross-references in the Old Testament that the New Testament writer is using to write their material.

If you search for the term "tribulation" and, of course, I did this in preparation for this episode and preparation for other things, as well... If you search for that, you're going to find that this is true. You can search for "sun," you can search for "moon," and the word "dark" in conjunction with sun or moon, or "blood moon"... You can do all the searching, and it's all associated with the Day of the Lord. The one exception is going to be Acts 2—Pentecost. Again, if this is supposed to be the beginning of the Tribulation, why are we here? If Pentecost marked the beginning of the Tribulation, then seven years later Jesus should have returned. Everywhere you look, it implodes on itself. It fails miserably. There are celestial signs mentioned in conjunction with end-times eschatology, but they are associated with the Day of the Lord. Just listen to Matthew 24:29:

<sup>29</sup> **Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

Same thing in Mark 13:24. Same thing in Luke 21:25. All you have to do is look up these items and the language itself is going to show you where these signs fit. They do not fit at the beginning of the Tribulation.

You could say, "Well, okay... If the Lord returns at the end of the Tribulation, then these signs are associated with the Second Coming because that's in conjunction with the Day of the Lord!" You'd be correct then. But guess what?

None of these things are in Revelation 12! None of them! So why would we use Revelation 12 to interpret these passages in the Gospels so that we can calculate dates? Why would we do that? To be a little cynical, I'll tell you why people do this: they do it to get an audience. They do it to sell things. They do it for ego. Or they do it because they're either sinister or just plain inept. That's why they do it. The greater question (frankly, the more important question) is why do people follow them? Why do so many people buy in to this thinking? They either have the book sitting on their lap where they could check it out, or they have software or something online. It is not difficult to check these things. I guess the conclusion I have to draw is that we have a lot of people in our churches that either can't think well, are basically biblically illiterate, or they just don't care. That's really sad. Any one of those options is really sad. This is not rocket science. This is not like, "Oh, this guy is so smart! I have to listen to him because he spent his whole life studying this stuff!" Actually, you can destroy it in about five minutes with a concordance. You really could. But people won't do it. They're either disinterested or they've been somehow convinced that this is some sort of wizard in front of them or online making this website. They're not. They're not. You have scripture. You can look these things up for yourself—and you should. If you have the tools and you're not using them, that's on you. It's sad to say, but that's on you.

#### **4. It is also based in part on over-reading the "sign of the Son of Man."**

40:00

People arbitrarily say that Revelation 12 is the Sign of the Son of Man. Let's put our thinking caps on. Let's utilize the powers of our investigative minds to dig into this. As we read through Revelation 12, does the phrase "Son of Man" ever show up? No. Well, if we looked up the phrase "Son of Man" everywhere else in the New Testament, does that ever reference anything in Revelation 12—these astronomical signs? No, it doesn't.

Again, if you had a concordance, you could do that in a couple minutes. You could destroy the foundation of the idea with very little effort. You look at Matthew 24:

**<sup>29</sup> Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.<sup>30</sup> Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

The Tribulation is past. There is the reference to the Son of Man. We get astronomical signs. "The sun will be darkened." Is that what Revelation 12 says? No. "The moon will not give its light." Is that what Revelation 12 says? No. We do



get an allusion to "the stars will fall from heaven," but if you've taken Revelation 12 as astronomy, then you have to literalize that. So does Revelation 12 describe asteroids falling? Comets? Meteors falling to earth? No, it doesn't. It describes a war in heaven that involves Satan, which tells you that it's talking about divine beings. It's talking about spiritual stars—spiritual members of the heavens—not astronomical. Again, Revelation 12 doesn't point to anything future anyway. I should add that we should look at the description in verse 30:

**<sup>30</sup>Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

Clouds are not astral signs, folks. They are meteorological. Also, they're not mentioned in Revelation 12.

Let's just drift back here to the sign of the Son of Man. You can compare what's being said in these passages for a couple hours and poke fun at it, but I'm hoping you get the message. Just think about what's said and actually go look at the passages. Back to the sign of the Son of Man. This is actually a difficulty in Biblical Studies and New Testament Studies. There are a number of competing interpretations to the sign of the Son of Man, so our point here is that people over-read the sign of the Son of Man and they assume it's what's being described here in Revelation 12. The sign of the Son of Man is actually never identified at all, and that's why it's a problem. I'm going to quote a little section here from Luz' *Hermeneia Commentary*. I believe this volume is on Matthew. He says this about the sign of the Son of Man here in his discussion of Matthew 24:29-30. He says:

There are three competing interpretations. The first corresponds to the interpretive tradition of the ancient church, although today it has the fewest advocates. According to this interpretation the sign of the Son of Man is a cosmic cross appearing in the sky... the *Dichache* in 16.6 already understood it this way...

The *Didache* is part of what we would call the early patristic or Early Church Fathers set of writings. It's actually pretty close to the New Testament era. It's kind of a Christian... I don't want to say "handbook" because that's a little too flippant, but it's sort of a discipleship manual or a manual for following Jesus. It's an early Christian text.

The *Dichache* in 16.6 already understood it this and was followed by numerous older and more recent interpreters.

The second interpretation understands the sign in the holy war tradition as a field banner or flag, a standard. In support of this interpretation are especially a

number of biblical texts in which “sign” (σημεῖον) appears in connection with “trumpet” (σάλπιγξ; v. 31) with this meaning.

45:00

So the biblical words for "sign" and "trumpet" are often found together. And when they are—especially in the Old Testament—it refers to sort of a military situation where you have a field banner that becomes the particular sign to coordinate troop movements or for a specific regiment (if you want to use that term)... the specific portion of a tribe that goes out to war, and that sort of thing. So what he's suggesting here is that we need to judge the sign of the Son of Man along with the reference to trumpets. If you do that, you're going to have the sign of the Son of Man having something to do (*perhaps*—this is a guess because it's never actually spelled out) in some way associated with the Feast of Trumpets or the trumpets that sounded on Tishri 1 or something like that. If you took it that way, that's a connection to the Tishri 1 of Revelation 12. But again, Revelation 12 talks about a past event, not a future one. It doesn't give us the details that say "This is how you should read this passage." Again, this is a guess.

And also, Revelation 12 doesn't refer to the sign of the Son of Man. Why wouldn't it refer to the sign of the Son of Man? Because it's *past*. It's relating a past event, not a future one. That's why the sign of the Son of Man is not mentioned in Revelation 12. The third view, going back to Luz:

In contrast to these two interpretations is a third, specifically modern, interpretation that assumes no particular sign *in addition to* the Son of Man. [MH: After the word "sign" you have "of" the Son of Man.] “Of the Son of Man” is understood here as an epexegetical genitive.

Without getting into the grammar-speak, the sign *is* the Son of Man himself. The sign of the Son of Man is the actual appearance of the Son of Man. This is the third view. So the only sign promised by Jesus is his appearance itself. That's how you would parse the third option.

Again, these are three views and they have competition among scholars. They've got something going for them, except maybe the first one. I think the first one may be a little far-fetched. But it's part of the Early Church tradition. If you were living a few decades after the crucifixion you might think of the cross as the sign of the Son of Man. That's understandable, but there's nothing exegetical to hang that on. So the second and third view are really the ones that get discussed by scholars. But scripture itself is ambiguous. There's no clarity on the matter.

We might ask ourselves, as well, "In Matthew, he has these astronomical signs and in Matthew 24:29-30 he's talking about sun, moon, and stars and losing their brightness and all that kind of stuff..." Might we want to ask where that comes from? It comes from the Old Testament, as I mentioned before. Generally, the Day of the Lord gets described in terms of these astronomical phenomena a lot.

You get Amos 5:18, 5:20, 8:9ff, Jeremiah 4:23, Zephaniah 1:15, Ezekiel 32:7, Joel 2:10... You get a number of these references. But specifically, Matthew is referring to two passages: Isaiah 13:10 and Isaiah 34:4. I'm going to read a little quotation here from Hagner in this regard. This is Hagner's commentary on the same passage:

The lines used to describe the changes in the sun, moon and stars are drawn from the language of the LXX. Thus the reference to the sun being darkened and the moon not giving its light is taken from the apocalyptic material of Isa 13:10 (the only significant difference is Matthew's synonym φέγγος [cf. Joel 2:10 and 4:15] for φῶς, "light"). Although Isa 13:10 also mentions the stars not giving their light, Matthew next alludes to the LXX of Isa 34:4: "all the stars will fall [πεσεῖται] like leaves from a vine and as leaves fall from a fig tree [ἀπὸ συκῆς]" (with this last point, cf. the fig tree parable of vv 32–33). [MH: So it's in close proximity to what Matthew is talking about here regarding the fig tree.] Only Matthew's ἀπὸ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, "from the sky," added to complete the sense, is not verbally paralleled in these LXX passages.

The fourth line, καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις τῶν οὐρανῶν σαλευθήσονται, "and the powers of heaven will be shaken," finds no direct parallel in the OT but is similar to the statement in Joel 2:10: "the heaven will be shaken" (σεισθήσεται); cf. Isa 34:4: "the heaven will be rolled up like a scroll"

50:00

So conceptually they're the same, but the wording is not the same. Did you notice (or do you have in your head) the context of Isaiah 13? Matthew, talking about the Day of the Lord (the return of the sign of the Son of Man and all that stuff), quotes Isaiah 13. Isaiah 13 is an oracle against Babylon. If you've listened to the podcast for any length, you know that Babylon is a big deal. We're not just talking about the city. The way the Jews generally (and New Testament writers specifically) think of Babylon... They're not just thinking it's a bad place because "our people spent 70 years in captivity there and that was awful!" That's part of it, but Babylon as a metaphor of chaos and everything that is oppositional to the Most High God and his people goes all the way back into the early chapters of Genesis. You say, "Why bring that up?" What I'm suggesting is that maybe this talk in Matthew 24:29-30 about all this cosmic stuff going on at the time of the Lord's return is not about astronomy at all. Maybe we're supposed to be thinking of spiritual warfare here. Maybe we're supposed to be thinking of Babylon because Babylon is sort of the ground-zero metaphor for the hostile forces of darkness that oppose God and his people. Maybe that's what we're supposed to be thinking! Maybe it's just saying that the Lord's going to return in the context of a time of utter spiritual darkness. Maybe that's the point. Maybe it doesn't have anything at all to do with physical astronomy.

We're going to get to one more point after this that I think sort of strengthens that idea. If you go to Isaiah 34 (the other passage that he quotes), who is in the crosshairs in Isaiah 34:4? You've got the nations on the earth and the powers in heaven—the Deuteronomy 32 Worldview—the nations are under the dominion of the powers of darkness, fallen gods. But you read a few verses down after the quotation and who is mentioned? Edom! You couldn't think of Edom without thinking of Babylon in the Old Testament period. We covered the book of Obadiah here on the podcast. If you want to know why I'm saying that Edom has a close association with Babylon, go listen to those two episodes on Obadiah. You can't think of Edom without thinking about Babylon. One became a metaphor for the other, and it's because of the circumstances of what happened when Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. Edom *helped*! So it's another way of referring to this matrix of ideas—this complex of ideas.

**5. The people who prop up the "September 23 is the end of the world" idea fail to note that the falling stars language refers to divine beings.**

This is for the Revelation 8 "Wormwood" crowd, too. The "flaming, falling mountains from the sky coming from the earth" and that kind of language refers to divine beings in Jewish literature, especially in the Second Temple period. It can refer to that in the Old Testament here and there, as well, but especially the Second Temple period. In other words, this language may have absolutely nothing at all to do with physical astronomy (comet, meteor, asteroid...). It may have nothing at all to do with it. You could go read my blog post on Wormwood, but I'm going to quote a little bit from Beale's Revelation commentary, which I quote there on Revelation 8:10-11. This will be where I wrap up. Just listen to this:

As with the second trumpet, so again here a great fireball is thrown from heaven. This time it is not depicted as "a great mountain" but as "a great star burning like a torch." If this is a continuation of the similar judgment of the first two trumpets, then the fire can again be understood as a metaphor of famine. We have observed elsewhere that stars represent angelic beings in Revelation, the OT, and post-biblical Judaism [after the Old Testament]. These angels themselves often corporately represent earthly peoples and kingdoms, and fire typically symbolizes judgment in the Apocalypse and other related literature (see on 8:8). The same must be the case here...

And the angels that have control over the nations... the fallen sons of God. This might really be what's in view here.

This interpretation is supported by 1 Enoch 18:13 and 1 Enoch 21:3, which describe the judgment of fallen angels as "stars like great burning mountains," (cf.

Rev 8:8) and 1 En 108:3–6 , which borrows the same image to portray the punishment of sinful people (cf. also 1 En. 86–88).

I'll just read you 1 Enoch 18:13 here. It says:

There I saw seven stars like great burning mountains.

55:00

The seven stars in 1 Enoch 18 are going to be identified as fallen Watchers. 1 Enoch 21:3 says:

There I beheld seven of the stars of heaven bound and thrown into the Abyss like great mountains burning with fire.

1 Enoch 21 is about how the Watchers were bound (the sinning Watchers of Genesis 6 and the whole Watchers story). They're referred to in similar language—these stars of heaven like great mountains burning with fire are thrown in the Abyss. It's the language of Revelation 8. It has nothing to do with Nibiru or Planet X. Again, if you want the astronomy for why that's nonsense, go back to Stuart's podcast and he'll give you all the science you can handle there.

Just to wrap up and end with Beale here, this kind of language for the stars falling, even to the point where they're described as "flaming mountains" or "fiery stars falling to the earth," that is stock language in Jewish apocalyptic literature—the book of Revelation and Second Temple material. It's a stock description for fallen sons of God—fallen divine beings. It has nothing to do with astronomy at all. So you've got problems if you're trying to marry Revelation 12 to this stuff. You're doing it arbitrarily. You're doing it without scriptural justification. And you might even be missing the entire point. The entire point might just be spiritual warfare associated with the Second Coming. The dragon was angry enough at the first coming, "he knows his time is short," and all that stuff that we read. It might just be about spiritual warfare. It might have nothing to do with astronomy at all. But it's just one of the ambiguities that are actually present in the text. And when the text is ambiguous, you need to let it be ambiguous. You need to let it be what it is. You don't need to start filling in the gaps with your imagination or your ego. And that's what's happening with all these date-setting prophets, and then they want to back away and tell you how they didn't say this-or-that or "this was fulfilled in a different way than I thought." And they'll keep people following them. What they deserve is rebuke and your inattention. They deserve to be ignored.

I hope this will be yet another lesson in why these people should just not have an audience at all.

**TS:** Yeah, Mike. And the reason why they do have an audience (in my opinion only) is that people just don't take the time to figure out what's going on.

People/Christians hear something sensational like "the world is going to end" and they don't really understand the reasoning behind it, so then they go buy the book or watch the show or do whatever, and they listen to it because they don't really know what the Bible says about anything, so they pay attention to it to see if there's any validity to it. I'm not going to complain if the world's going to end tomorrow, but I think a lot of these people just don't know. They're ignorant. They don't know what the Bible really says about anything because people don't read the Bible today. So they're going to listen to the first person that comes up with some sensational answer.

**MH:** Yep. And even in the unbelieving community, there are going to be hundreds of thousands (maybe millions) of people who read that Huffington Post piece that aren't believers at all and have no interest in the Bible, and they're not going to go look. They're not going to fact-check that!

**TS:** No.

**MH:** That's going to become what the Bible is for them.

**TS:** It's entertainment. It's fun. It's just those weirdos over here. And, for instance, that guy that's getting the most attention about this... they're calling him a "Christian numerologist," which doesn't even exist. What is that?

**MH:** [laughing] Yeah, thanks for that!

**TS:** They're just making us look foolish.

**MH:** It's sad.

**TS:** But there you go. Hopefully people come to listen to this show and get some answers. Mike, next week we're going to have another special guest!

**MH:** Yep. I'm looking forward to this. We're going to have Holly Pivec on. She has the blog "Spirit of Error." She's a co-author of a book on the New Apostolic Reformation. I had to read her book to become familiar with it because I don't pay attention to popular Christian movements at all and I'm really divorced from anything that would sort of touch the Charismatic Movement. Those of you who have come to events and have heard some of my interactions on some other things know that I'm not hostile to people who are practicing the gifts and say the gifts are still for today. It has to have a scriptural grounding and a context for it, but that's about as close as I get to that world of Christianity. There's a lot of abuse that goes on there. There's a lot of nonsense there, as well. So I wanted to have Holly on so that she can talk specifically about this thing called the New Apostolic Reformation and hopefully learn from her what that term means in relationship to other terms and how we should navigate that part of Christianity. How do we separate the people who are being thoughtful and really want to

1:00:00



tether their theology to the text and the people who want to tether their theology to emotion and "authority" and lord it over people and do things like this?

Those of you who are listening out there, maybe you've had some good experience with that part of the believing Church or you've had some negative experiences. We've had Fern and Audrey on a few times and they've had some really bad experiences in the deliverance movement. That's going to be part of this kind of discussion. But I wanted to have Holly on because she has co-authored this book, and I think it's an important resource. We all need to be able to learn a little something from her. This is her thing. She spends a lot of time reading about these people (and their own material) and talking about what this NAR thing really is. I think it'll be a good episode.

**TS:** Okay. Well, Mike... Just in case this is our last show, it's been fun.

**MH:** [laughs] And I won the League! [laughter] The Pugs pull it out just in the nick of time!

**TS:** A little asterisk with it because it's not a full season, so...

Anyway, please go leave us a review wherever you consume our podcast for the people who are left behind so they can get caught up. But all right, Mike! We appreciate you setting the record straight and letting us know why we're still here on the 24th. I just want to thank everybody else for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God bless.