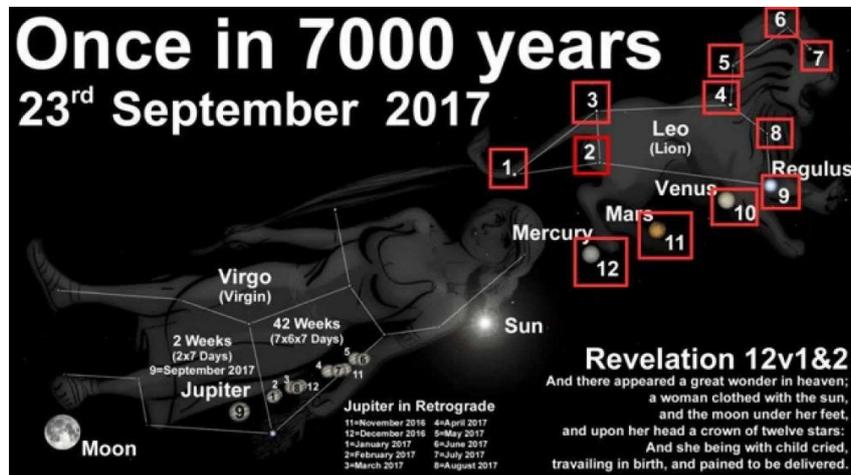


The sign of the Woman and Child

Is the Sign of Revelation 12 of any real prophetic significance this September 23?



By Peter McArthur

The date of 23 September 2017 is another one of those speculations some have grasped hold off believing it has some prophetic significance regarding the End Days. Much of the foundation of this kind of thinking stems from the belief that in the past, before Moses committed God's words to writing, YHWH used the sun, moon and stars as the basic means by which He would communicate His fundamental truths to His people. So along with the emerging oral tradition went "signs" in the celestials, which could be decoded to reveal God's purposes.

The assumption at the moment is that the Revelation 12 sign depicts an apocalyptic event which will initiate the End Times tribulation period (also known as *Jacob's Trouble*) beginning on 23 September this year. This is based on the passage in Revelation 12:1 about celestial constellations aligning to herald that event.

"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."

The popular assumption of how this seemingly lines up with astronomy is outlined as follows: On 23 September 2017 the sun will be in the zodiac constellation of Virgo (the Virgin) — "*a woman clothed with the sun*". At the same time the moon will be at the feet of Virgo — "*with the moon under her feet*". Then the nine stars of the zodiac constellation of Leo, plus the three wandering planets of Mercury, Venus, and Mars, will be at the head of Virgo — "*on her head a crown of 12 stars*". The planet Jupiter will be in the centre of Virgo, and as the next weeks pass Jupiter will leave Virgo heading east, past the Virgin's "feet", inferring — "*She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she laboured to give birth*". Jupiter being the largest of the planets, is often referred to as the "king" of the planets, hence — "*She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod*".

I must admit that when this assumption began to become popular recently, I took a breath and sighed deeply. "Here we go again" I thought. We've had the Blood Moon Tetrads, and then the Shemittah year theory, and last month the Total Solar Eclipse in the US – all of which have been eagerly

grabbed by some people seeking understanding of the days we live in. None of those “signs” amounted to anything; prophetically speaking they all failed miserably. I shudder to reflect on how much time, energy and money was poured into trying to legitimize those futile speculations; and how many believers were once more led astray after investing considerable spiritual and emotional vigour (let alone prayer) into all this.

Sadly there have been many prophetic theories over the years that have caused the saints to become disappointed, and for some, even to abandon studying Scripture at all to discern the times. I’ve been a Pastor for over 40 years and been interested in End Time events for almost 30 years of that period; and I must admit there have been quite a few occasions when false theories have high-jacked my thinking. But still I press on knowing that we can know something solid and true about how the end will work out. It’s also caused me to be wary and more discerning about popular End Time teachings based on spurious “signs” and “events”. We need more than that.

Overview

So what follows is (I hope) a fairly straightforward overview of why I believe the September 23 sign is NOT of any lofty prophetic significance.

At face value the above text does seem to fit because on September 23 the sun will actually be in the constellation of the Virgin (Virgo) with our moon near her feet. Also the planet Jupiter will be in Virgo’s constellation with the three planets of Venus, Mars and Mercury to the right of Virgo in the neighbouring constellation of Leo. The proponents of this theory claim this and some other associated celestial occurrences are highly “unusual” or even “very rare”, a once in 7000 years happening.

I wonder if by using the “rarity” card the supporters of this theory think it may convince others of its validity. You may recall the “rare event” card was also used to support the Blood Tetrad Moon assumption too; and look what happened – nothing! Just because something seems to be “rare” or “unusual” is NOT enough to claim the theory to be true to Scripture.

In fact there’s nothing either “unusual” or “rare” about some of this. According to astronomers (www.stellarium.org www.skyandtelescope.com/online-resources/) as the earth orbits the sun each year, the sun does appear to move through the 12 constellations of the zodiac, spending about a month in each. Nor is it unusual to find the moon near the feet of Virgo because for one or two days every month the moon indeed appears near the feet of Virgo. Therefore for a day or two every September or October, the sun comes into view in Virgo with the moon resting at her feet - so this is not that remarkable.

The period of Jupiter’s orbit is a little less than 12 years and so Jupiter will be in Virgo (with the sun and the moon at the “feet”) once every 11 or 12 years. So you can see that the sun in Virgo, with the moon at her “feet” and Jupiter in the constellation, is in fact quite a regular occurrence.

So what is it that makes this regular occurrence a seemingly “rare” one? It’s because this year Jupiter will be near what is supposedly the “womb of Virgo” apparently representing “the child” that the woman is about to give birth to (see Rev 12:1-2 and 5-6). The theory goes that as Jupiter exits the lower part of the Virgin’s “womb” 42 weeks later, we can see a prophetic representation of the approximate length of the human gestation period – validating the scriptural text “**She (the virgin) gave birth to a son, a male child...**” (Rev 12:2 and 5). This symbol of a *woman in labour* is found in both Jewish and Christian scriptures and it’s those texts together with the End Time association which proponents suggest is valid evidence for the September 2017 alignment’s importance.

The supposed connection to Rosh Hashanah

As if to further support this there's the rather flimsy connection to the festival of **Rosh Hashanah** (Head of the Year/New Year). That name as such is actually not used in Scripture but is referred to as Yom Ha-Zikkaron (Day of Remembrance) or Yom Teruah (Day of Sounding of Shofar/Trumpet). See Lev 23:24-25.

In attempting to make the Revelation 12 sign seem more legitimate some have tried to identify it with the Feast of Trumpets, as if that will make it more prophetically acceptable. The Feast of Trumpets is the first of the autumn Feasts of YHWH and its timing is based on the first sighting of the new moon (from Jerusalem) which in 2017 is expected to begin on the evening of September 21 or 22 and end on the evening of the 23 (when the sign is supposedly fulfilled). Rosh Hashanah/Feast of Trumpets in Jewish tradition is believed to be a day when the dead will be resurrected and YHWH begins His judgment. Many Christians believe the period describes the tribulation period (Jacob's Troubles) found in Revelation. Some are bold enough to say that the Rapture could well take place about this time! This of course makes the whole acceptance of this Revelation 12 "sign" as very urgent indeed, because if you don't accept the proposition you might just miss out on the Rapture! This is nothing more than emotional and spiritual blackmail.

Not that unusual after all

But this celestial event isn't that unusual as it also happened on 4 other occasions within the past 1,000 years, in the Septembers of 1056, 1293, 1483 and 1827. So if we want to be consistent we need to ask why those past 4 occurrences (let alone others before that) didn't have the same significance people are attaching to it for this year. Saints, we need some honest accountability in this please.

Now the issue here is that we cannot take a text out of its surroundings and its general, common-sense meaning, let alone any literal meaning it might have. True, symbolism raises another issue, but you still can't isolate it from its surroundings. Even symbolism (or Typology as it's more accurately known) has its own way of adhering to its neighbouring phrasing. And you certainly shouldn't take a verse away from the previous and following verses. In other words, please don't ignore or whitewash the framework or even the "straight forwardedness" of the text.

So here we go! What do the following verses say?

(Rev 12:4-5) **“And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.”**

Now depending on your doctrinal slant, you'll either believe this "male child" to be Jesus (with faithful OT Israel being the woman bringing forth the Messiah), or the mature and fully perfected sons of God (the last day's church/christianity/religion being the woman out of who comes a last day's unflawed remnant).

I take it to refer to Jesus; the latter belief is connected to the false teaching of the Latter Rain (aka *Manifest Sons of God*) doctrine of early Pentecostalism. I was once caught up in this Latter Rain teaching but after some years of trying to make it realistically fit with Scripture I came to see it was in error. Not all my time was wasted while holding to it, because I did learn some very valuable lessons regarding discernment, sticking to the Word, and not taking things out of their obvious uncomplicated context. It all took some time but the Holy Spirit led me through it and then out of it!

The above verses clearly and straightforwardly point to the “woman” giving birth to Jesus, with His mother (Miriam/Mary) being the symbolic righteous woman of Israel. And quite plainly we see Satan tried to “devour” the child just after His birth when Herod attempted to purge the new-born king from amongst the young babes (Mtt 2:13 and 16).

“Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up! Take the child and His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the child to destroy Him...Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became very enraged, and sent and slew all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its vicinity, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the magi.”

Also Revelation 12:5 says this child will rule all the nations, and was caught up to be with God at His throne. The only one who fits this criterion is Jesus/Y’shua. He was and still is destined to rule over ALL nations (Mtt 28:18 and Rev 19:16) and is the One who has ascended into the celestials (Jhn 3:13). It is true that the End Times church will share in the ruling, overcoming and reigning (Rev 2:26-27 **“And to the one who is victorious and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre ...just as I have received authority from My Father”**) but that just shows we share in His victory in due time – it doesn’t displace Jesus as the forerunner of this in the verse being considered.

She gave birth to a “male child” can only refer to Jesus. The attempt by some to say that this refers to the Church, particularly the very End Time church, have a problem because Scripture doesn’t refer to the Church as “male” but in the feminine gender, “the Bride” (Rev 18:23 / 19:7 / 21:2 and 9).

The Zodiac

Now we also have another problem, the issue of the zodiac constellations being actual God-given “signs”. I admit I have trouble accepting that the zodiac is something God would use to show us things of great spiritual importance. Yes Scripture does refer to constellations (Amos 5:8 / Job 9:9) and of course God has used celestial signs before, but generally they have NOT been signs in the far-away heavenly constellations. Just because there’s some reference to Pleiades and Orion in Scripture is hardly convincing proof that the zodiac contains hidden messages from God.

Whenever celestial signs have been used in Scripture, even if they have been stars, the sun or moon, they have all been things we could see with the naked human eye. They haven’t been a far-off half-invisible alignment of far-away planets. They have all been sights in the sky an ordinary person could look up and see quite easily. There was no need for a telescope, star chart of the night sky, or computer programme. Heavenly signs should be obvious, not obscure! Otherwise what’s the point if you have to rely on having a star-gazing buff to interpret God’s messages to you?

The average person in the street would be very hard pressed to look at the night sky and point out the various constellations, with all their imagined symbols of Leo the lion, Aquarius the water bearer, Gemini the twins, etc. When I look up here in the South Hemisphere I can fairly easily find the Southern Cross (Acrux and Gacrux pointing to the Southern Celestial Pole) because it actually does LOOK like a cross! But no way can I see any of the other imagined mythologies up there!

When God uses the sun, moon, stars and even comets as messages and signs for us to heed, then obviously (pun intended) He wants us to SEE them, for those very signs to be apparent. Earlier everyday saints, especially in OT times, generally had little knowledge of the wandering of the celestial constellations. Yes there were trained astronomers and astrologers who had a sufficient handle on how the zodiac worked, but I don’t believe God meant us or the Hebrews to seek such

specialized help in deciphering the “signs”. They were for the common ordinary believer to look up from the earth and to actually see in the sky/heavens right above them. The Scriptures never claim that God designed the constellations as some kind of special revelatory purpose for us to probe into to get spiritual understanding. In fact you could say the very opposite is true.

Note these texts which stress that a person can literally look and see what’s in the sky without the need for expert assistance in determining their meaning. No telescope or star-chart required!

(Gen 1:14) **Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years."**

(Gen 1:16) **God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.**

(Gen 15:5) **And He took him (Abraham) outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."**

(Deut 4:9) **And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them.**

(Job 22:12) **Is not God in the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!**

(Isa 40:26) **Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name.**

(Ezek 32:7) **And when I extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon will not give its light.**

(Joel 2:10) **Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.**

(Mtt 24:29) **But 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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

The meaning really couldn't be plainer; these are all objects you can see with the human eye. Signs should be OBVIOUS, not obscure.

Anyway we can be sure that the sun, moon, stars and celestials were all made and purposed by YHWH, but can we be absolutely certain that the zodiac constellations are from Him as they stand today? I know there are lots of books, You Tube videos and articles suggesting that God intended us to get a grip on how the constellations move and work, so we could decode them. But is that what God meant in the verses quoted above? I don't think so. He was speaking plainly about celestial objects we can see, like the glaring sun, the different phases of the bright moon, and the twinkling of stars (no matter how far away they might be from us).

Click [here](#) to read some good Christian research on how the Zodiac goes back to the Tower of Babel. All the solid evidence we currently have doesn't support the oft-held claim that the constellations are a kind of ancient revelation code, a type of “Gospel in the Stars” idea. I know it's very popular in some quarters but I think it's a long bow to draw to make it all fit.

The observable objects described in the verses above are the “signs” we’re truly meant to see; and yes they can have symbolic and parabolic meanings to them. But beyond all that they are natural and actual objects which don’t require going beyond the Scripturally revealed typology already given. We need to avoid relying on those who supposedly have some special insight that the rest of the Body allegedly lacks. That is nothing more than an updated form of Gnosticism which feeds off people’s gullibility because they’re too lazy to study Scripture closely themselves.

Other accommodating data for this theory

On top of all this some have looked for corroborating evidence to further validate the theory.

They point out that September 21-22 is the 70 year anniversary of the resolution allowing for Israel to be recognized as a state.

It’s also 70 years from 1947 to the rebirth of modern Israel.

And the 50th anniversary or year of Jubilee for Jerusalem.

It is the 500th anniversary of the Reformation.

Plus the 70th anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

And finally 2017 is the 70th Jubilee since Exodus (1483 BC).

Now it might be that all these anniversaries are true by what does it prove? There are plenty of other dates important in the life of both Israel and the Church but they don’t get a mention because they just don’t fit the preconceived theory.

It kind of reminds me of the difference between exegesis and eisegesis. These are words used by Bible scholars to highlight two conflicting approaches to Bible study.

Simply put “exegesis” is the the way you read a text and then get something **out** of it through careful objective analysis. The conclusions you arrive at are those you get by following the text as is. You draw out the meaning of the text but remain faithful to its meaning.

On the other hand “eisegesis” is the very opposite way to study. You might read the Bible say, and have some conscious or even subconscious bias, and through your subjective rather non-analytical study you inject your own ideas **into** it, making it mean what you want it to mean. You act selectively.

Some of that eisegesis attitude can often be found in theories like the September 23 “sign”. We can so easily let the imagination of our minds fasten on whatever seems to validate our excitement and then run with it, looking for anything to support it. This is known as “[Confirmation Bias](#)”.

My conclusion

So where are we in all this? Christians today need to be very careful about being drawn into such sensationalist claims. These are days of mass media hype where we can be easily inundated with the latest prophetic fad, and of course it only takes a few clicks on the internet to find these.

Might I just state that **I do believe** there have been and still will be, signs in the sky. But I do not want to be led down a rabbit hole of false assumptions based on spurious use of Scripture overlaid with the imaginations of men. The former usual sorts itself as time passes, because wise people check out the Word and adjust to it. The latter though is often much harder to discern because man’s imagination can be a very deadly thing, spiritually speaking. Once it takes hold in a person’s unfettered mind, imagination will breed further and even wilder imagination. Then watch out! Sensationalism can so easily fall into the hands of the enemy.

However as in all things pertaining to the unknowable preciseness of the End Times we do need to still have a humble attitude. All this is just my “take” on it, from what I glean from the Word and Christian experience. We shouldn’t cease to interpret prophecies just because there’s some negativity and bad past experiences of failed “prophecies”. But how we need wisdom!

I guess what all this does is to wake us up to the times and seasons, and to get back to the Word of God. So it’s a good and wise thing to be attentive as possible, to stand up for Scriptural integrity when needed, but also to be alert to the leading of the Holy Spirit lest we think we know it all – that includes me of course! The one thing we don’t want is that when September 24+ comes for there to be more contempt shown for the prophetic word. The issue really is; **Will any of this make us wiser?**

May the Spirit of God lead us into ALL truth, lest we miss the day of our visitation!

Peter McArthur

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