

A Wave of Prophecies That the World Is Ending Saturday May Not Be Correct, It Turns Out

By Ruth Graham, on Slate

Hurricanes, earthquakes, [sinkholes](#), [rising seas](#), the threat of nuclear annihilation: It doesn't take a doomsday prophet to know we're living in unstable times. It does, however, take a doomsday prophet to predict the exact date of our obliteration. And sure enough, several fringe Christian prophets are now claiming [the apocalypse is coming on Saturday](#). That leaves just a few days to prepare!

David Meade, a [self-published author](#), bases his prediction on a complex set of calculations and inferences centered around the number 33 and imminent interference from the planet Nibiru. Sept. 23 is 33 days after the solar eclipse, which Meade sees as significant. He believes that a constellation will reveal itself over Jerusalem on Saturday, triggering the launch of a series of catastrophic "tribulations" that will mean the end of life as we know it. NASA, meanwhile, has [repeatedly said](#) that the planet Nibiru does not exist.

A Christian website called Unsealed similarly argues that Sept. 23 marks the [beginning of the end](#). The site produced a video on the significance of the date focusing on the rapture, a sudden event that some Christian traditions claim will whisk true believers up to heaven while nonbelievers suffer years of torment on Earth. Unsealed also maintains a detailed "[Rapture Index Score](#)" that predicts the likelihood of imminent rapture based on 27 separate indicators, including volcanoes, extreme weather, violent protests, and "delusional thinking" (currently at a 9 out of 10). Suffice to say, we're getting close.

YouTube is crowded with videos making similar claims: The date will bring "[Israel's new beginning](#)," the "[firestorm of the Golden Empire](#)," and the most significant astronomical convergence "[since Adam and Eve](#)." Another "[missionary evangelist](#)" breaks out a whiteboard to sketch out a complex timeline involving Abraham, the death of Jesus, Israel's Six-Day War, and

the [Balfour Declaration](#)—all leading up to Saturday. Some of the videos have millions of views.

These prophets' predictions are based on a creative reading of the 12th chapter in the New Testament book of Revelation. To make a trippy story short, the [passage](#) goes something like this: A pregnant woman gives birth to a son and flees to the wilderness for 1,260 days. War breaks out in heaven between angels and a dragon; the dragon retreats to Earth and chases the woman. She suddenly develops eaglelike wings and flees to the wilderness again, and the dragon ends the chapter angry and standing on the beach. Yadda yadda yadda, the apocalypse starts on Sept. 23, 2017.

Ok, technically, the Book of Revelation doesn't mention that *exact* date. And yes, Jesus himself said that, regarding the timing of the end of the world, "[no one knows](#)." Though there is a long Christian tradition of studying eschatology—matters related to the afterlife and the end of the world—those making literal predictions based are far from the mainstream. *Christianity Today* columnist Ed Stetzer recently [lamented](#) Fox News' coverage of the Sept. 23 predictions: "There is not a legitimate field called Christian numerology," he wrote. "It's simply fake news that a lot of Christians believe the world will end on Sept. 23."

Still, the specificity of these prophets' visions has an enduring appeal. When a popular New York sect predicted Jesus's return to Earth on Oct. 22, 1844, the result was known as the "Great Disappointment." (That sect [inspired elements](#) of *The Leftovers*.) Many prophets predicted doom in the year 2000. And in 2011, a radio ministry run by evangelist Harold Camping famously [spent \\$100 million](#) promoting his vision that the world would end on May 11 that year. For believers, these prophecies are like a theological lottery ticket, offering long-shot hope pinned to a very specific date. For the rest of us, they're a welcome chance to face the prospect of total global destruction with laughter, rather than the inchoate anxiety to which we've become so accustomed lately. Has anyone taken a look at what was going astrologically on Nov. 8, 2016?