

## Our Night Sky for the week of October 22

Where is Mars?

I haven't mentioned Mars for some time, in fact it is still there but hiding. Right now, Mars is on the opposite side of the sun on its 687-day solar year and is about 378 million KM from earth. Mars and Earth frequently pass each other. Remember Earth is moving on almost the same orbital plane and about twice the speed, so we pass Mars' position in the sky quite often. This means Mars often appears to move backwards in the sky. This was very confusing to ancient people that timed most of the important events during the years based on the movements they counted on in the night sky. I can imagine, a lot of failed crops or infertile sheep were blamed on Mars. I mentioned previously that Galileo put together how the heliocentric solar system worked. Mars' strange behaviour was another nagging clue that he tied into his theory.

There are many strange behaviours in our night sky, another is Venus, sometimes it leads the sun around. In other words, you only see Venus just before sunrise. Sometimes it follows the sun around. In other words, you can see it after sunset. And even Mars as it will be later in November just trailing the sun and visible for a few minutes after sunset.

These are some of the puzzling events they used often as the key drivers of how they ran their society. Echoes from history, "hey Matilda, what did the high priest say we should do this year, I haven't got time for all that hocus pocus, "