



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

An eclipse of the sun on the eve of a new millennium.



A sermon preached on Lord's Day morning, 15th August, 1999, in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church by the minister, Rev. Ivan Foster.

Few will have been able to escape the news and publicity that surrounded the recent eclipse of the sun. In many ways it was a media-generated event. Even so, the path of the eclipse saw hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, in many countries turning their eyes upward to see the strange sight in the sky. What was noticeable was the emphasis given to paganism. The foolish prancings and pratings of these rejecters of Christ were fully reported. People were encouraged to expect "spiritual sensations" during the eclipse and many duly reported such feelings as the shadow of the moon passed over them. All this stands in stark contrast to an event that was foreshadowed by Wednesday's eclipse. That event is repeatedly referred to in the Bible. Such references speak of the importance of the event. It will not be the fleeting media-hyped event that will be forgotten in a day, but it will herald the end of things on this earth as men have known them for thousands of years, and it will usher in a new age about which the people of God have meditated since the beginning of time.

Consider some of the references to this event.

Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine , Isaiah 13:9-10.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. . . . The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel, Joel 2:31; 3:15-16.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken , Matthew 24:29.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind , Revelation 6:12-13.

I. THE DAWN OF THESE EVENTS, LIKE THE RECENT ECLIPSE, HAS BEEN LONG AWAITED



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Scientists were able to predict the exact time that the eclipse would take place for there is order in God's universe. As the sun rises and sets on its circuit through the heavens so the passing of the moon between the earth and the sun, thus causing the eclipse, was known by men who were able to calculate precisely when it would take place. Likewise, God has indicated that this age will end at a certain time and while we do not know the time or the date, we are told of the events that will herald the return of Christ and the end of the age. One of those signs is the occurrence of the phenomena, in the heavens and on the earth, mentioned in the verses above. Before those events there will be well documented occurrences, not least of which is the great religious apostasy which is filling the land at this time. The people of God have looked for these events since near the beginning of time.

The scientists were busy for years in preparation for the eclipse seen in the United Kingdom. They made sure that they would be in a place where they could see it plainly. So ought the people of God to be preparing for the return of Christ. We ought to be ever readying ourselves for that day.

II. THESE EVENTS, LIKE THE ECLIPSE, WILL DRAW THE EYES OF ALL MANKIND UPWARD

That referred to in our verses will be no localised event, seen only by the few. I am inclined to think that the whole world will know when these things take place. Consider these words. *And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth*, Isaiah 2:19. That is something that all the inhabitants of the earth will know about.

Here is a further reference. *For thus saith the LORD of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts*, Haggai 2:6-7.

These verses indicate that this eclipse of the sun will be far more impressive than any natural solar eclipse. It will be but part of a series of terrifying events that take place at that time.

The trivialising of the recent eclipse is part of Satan's attempt to deceive men further and encourage them to despise the Bible's references to these future events.

III. THESE EVENTS WILL BE PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT FOR SOME

Just as the eclipse was especially significant for those in the path of the moon's shadow, so these future events will have particular meaning for some.

1. For Israel. It will herald deliverance from their enemies, the end of their blindness, the dawn of their reconciliation to God and the fulfilling of the promises given to Abraham. Speaking of the redemption of Israel, Paul says: *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel*



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shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob , Romans 11:25-26.

Zechariah 12:8-10 and 14:2-3 are just two of the many portions dealing with this time that should also be considered.

2. For Antichrist . These events will signal the end for him and his armies. *Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more, Joel 3:9-17.*

3. For the world. *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea, Isaiah 11:6-9.*

There will be no difficulties with those unwilling to decommission their weapons of terror and war! What peace will ensue then! Learn that it is only when Christ reigns that peace comes.

4. For the Christian. *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ , Philipians 3:20. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation , Hebrews 9:28. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless, 2 Peter 3:13-14.*

IV. THE DANGER THAT WILL FACE MEN ON THAT DAY.

The reiterated warning that went out over the media before the eclipse was: "Don't look directly at the sun."

The sight of Christ returning in His glory will be a terrible one for those who are not prepared to see Him.



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And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth, Zechariah 14:12.

No man in the flesh may see the Lord. This was told to Moses when he desired to see the Lord's glory. *Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live, Exodus 33:20.* Hence Manoah's lament, Judges 13:22. Having seen the Lord, he feared lest he would die. But he was spared death for the Lord appeared to him and his wife with His glory veiled.

The glorified redeemed, however, face no such danger. The redeemed may look on the Lord. *And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Job 19:26.* The Saviour said that the saved would see God. *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God, Matthew 5:8.*

Likewise John held out the hope of us seeing Christ face to face one day. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is, 1 John 3:2.*

Are you prepared for the glorious day? Are you sheltered and shaded from the wrath of a sin-hating God and the fiery damnation that will destroy the wicked when He returns to this earth? Unless you are under the blood of the Lamb of God, when that day comes you will be destroyed.

It will be a repeat of the circumstances of the passover in Egypt. Only those who were sheltered beneath the sprinkled blood of the passover lamb escaped the judgment of God that swept through the land of Egypt.

Be ready for that day.

Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh, Matthew 24:44.