

Signs in the Heavens: the Coming Eclipse

(preached 4/7/24)

On Monday, April 8th we in Steuben County NY will be treated to a rare event: a total solar eclipse! If you choose to view this event, and I recommend you do, it's important to wear protective eye glasses that are designed specifically to watch an eclipse. It's also recommended you wear black or gray clothing to be treated to see how these colors respond to the event. It will only last a little over a minute, and I suggest being outdoors by 3:15 PM and the event should begin in a few minutes. My family and I have the special glasses and we'll be watching!

The questions for us are these:

- Is the eclipse a sign of the end times and the return of Jesus?
- Is the Rapture going to happen that day?
- Is it a sign of impending judgment and the wrath of God?
- Should we be scared or concerned?
- What does it mean?

First: ***the Rapture isn't going to happen that day.*** I've made it clear that I don't believe in an imminent pre-Tribulation Rapture and DO believe the catching away is preceded by signs, thus I understand if you say I'm biased. Allow me to say this: the prophetic track record for the church trying to set a date or even general time for the Rapture is 0%. I used to "play it safe" and say something like "I think it's going to happen in the next 10 years!" and guess what? Even a more general prediction like that was wrong.

So now we ask if the eclipse is something God has sent and if there is a prophetic significance to it. My answer is MAYBE, even PROBABLY.

In the Beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth. Before any animal or human was ever placed on the planet, the Lord did this:

[Gen 1:14-16 KJV] 14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and **let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:** 15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: [he made] the stars also.

The Lord created the sun, moon, and stars (which includes the constellations) for SIGNS, seasons, days, and years.

The Hebrew word "signs" translates to "*a distinguishing mark, a banner, omen, miracle, and warning.*"

Signs were meant by the Lord to be observed by a being who can comprehend them, and we are the beings who were meant to view, read, interpret, and act upon them. Significant parts of the Old Covenant God made with Israel were based around the sun and moon including planting, harvest, the feasts, high holy days, and more. The Hebrew calendar is based on the moon whereas the Gentile calendar we use to this day is based on the sun. The reason we have 365 days with one leap year every 4 years is completely based on the sun.

God will also use the sun, moon, and stars to signify the biggest event in all of the Bible: the coming of the Lord to earth. Often called “The Day of the Lord” this momentous day was anticipated with great hope and fear at the same time. While the Lord “visited” the earth at Mt. Sinai to give Moses the commandments, the Day of Lord speaks to God coming here to LIVE.

Consider that a moment: God is completely holy, righteous, and just. What happens if and when He shows up in a world drowning in wickedness?

I remember living with my dad and stepmom, with Barb playing the role of the Holy Spirit. I would do something wrong and she would not only point it out, but call upon me to rectify it BEFORE dad got home. When I stubbornly refused, she would warn me that there would be Hades to pay when dad returned.

If I didn’t repent, then dad’s coming was a moment of fear and trembling.... When he got home, wrath would descend! For me it was hearing him walk through the door, my stepmom filling him in, and the worst part was the tromp of his work boots as he headed in my direction. I remember I would think “nuts! I should have done as I was told!”

When Jesus returns the good news is He’s coming to stay...the bad news (for some!) is that He’s here to crush all rebellion and disobedience. To make war upon all the unbelieving nations and anyone who rejected Him as Lord and Savior.

I used to know the general time that day was coming home, and we need to know the general times that Jesus is coming back. God gave us the sun, moon, and stars for that reason and He began to warn His people thousands of years ago.

