

## God of Wonders

Genesis 1: 14-19

Ecclesiastes 1: 1-11



Earlier this week, one event united people from across our state, across our country, even across our globe.

No, I'm not talking about WrestleMania, even though that is where I was at last Sunday.

I'm talking about, as I'm sure you all know quite well, the solar eclipse that happened this past Monday.



I looked up some facts about this total solar eclipse on [astronomy.com](http://astronomy.com) and I want to share a couple of those facts with you this morning.

This is the first total solar eclipse in the US since 2017, and before that you have to go back to February of 1979. The next one won't happen until 2044. By the way, I have seen that Walt Disney World is in the path of totality in 2044 – in case you want to wish upon a star while you watch that other stellar event.

The phenomenon isn't limited to events in outer space. As totality nears, odd things start to happen on earth. Besides a night-like darkness, any breeze or wind will usually dissipate, birds will usually stop chirping, and the temperature can drop 10-15 degrees.

Speaking of totality, this most recent eclipse reached a maximum totality of about 4.5 minutes. But this isn't the longest possible totality. The maximum possible totality for any total eclipse is about 7 minutes 32 seconds. The next eclipse that approaches that long of a totality won't happen until June 13, 2132 – so maybe don't book your hotel for that one just yet.

And finally, my favorite of the facts I found: we get to experience a total eclipse because the sun and the moon have the same apparent size. Even though the sun is about 400 times larger than the moon, it also sits about 400 times farther away, making them appear the same size.



Something like a total solar eclipse can make us start thinking about pretty big things – the size of the planet we live on, the sizes of the sun and the moon and even our neighboring planets, the vastness of our galaxy and universe.

A few hundred years ago, we thought we were the center of the universe. We thought everything revolved around us. So when during the Renaissance we learned that we weren't the center, that we're really on a rock floating around a star, that challenged our perception of our place and our importance in the universe.

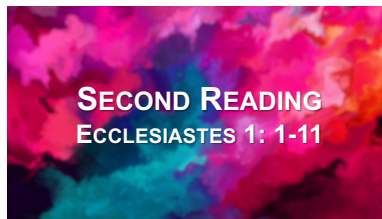
And thinking about those things can also make us realize just how small we are. Everything we see and experience and love and worry about all of a sudden seem so insignificant.

When I think about things like the size of the universe and the vastness of the whole thing, I'll be honest, sometimes a feeling of meaninglessness starts to creep in on me. We are quite small when you look at the bigger picture.

Why would God create all of that when all we need is this little corner of the universe?

What do our lives really mean when you factor in how tiny and unimportant we seem to be?

What importance do we really have in all of this?



Thinking about all of this can make us feel like the Teacher in the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes. Let's read the first 11 verses of the first chapter of this book:

**1** *The words of the Teacher, son of David, king in Jerusalem:*

**2** *"Meaningless! Meaningless!"*

*says the Teacher.*

*"Utterly meaningless!*

*Everything is meaningless."*

**3** *What do people gain from all their labors  
at which they toil under the sun?*

- <sup>4</sup> Generations come and generations go,  
but the earth remains forever.*
- <sup>5</sup> The sun rises and the sun sets,  
and hurries back to where it rises.*
- <sup>6</sup> The wind blows to the south  
and turns to the north;  
round and round it goes,  
ever returning on its course.*
- <sup>7</sup> All streams flow into the sea,  
yet the sea is never full.  
To the place the streams come from,  
there they return again.*
- <sup>8</sup> All things are wearisome,  
more than one can say.  
The eye never has enough of seeing,  
nor the ear its fill of hearing.*
- <sup>9</sup> What has been will be again,  
what has been done will be done again;  
there is nothing new under the sun.*
- <sup>10</sup> Is there anything of which one can say,  
"Look! This is something new"?  
It was here already, long ago;  
it was here before our time.*
- <sup>11</sup> No one remembers the former generations,  
and even those yet to come  
will not be remembered  
by those who follow them.*



The NIV translation labels this group of verses, “Everything is Meaningless,” which is appropriate because that is the overriding sentiment here. It even says that right up front.

Not exactly inspiring, I know. It probably doesn’t fill you with hope for the coming week.

The author of Ecclesiastes, though, does have a reason for deconstructing so many things we hold dear through much of this book. He ends up arriving at a conclusion of what really matters in life, and that our duty as people is to fear God and keep His commandments.

So Ecclesiastes isn't nearly as depressing a book as it seems in its opening verses. There is a very important lesson in all of it.

We also, even after fully realizing where we are in the universe and our relative size and place within it, have a similar conclusion to arrive at today.

Because actually, I think this total eclipse (and events and discoveries like it) should tell us quite a bit about how awesome our God really is, and just how important we are to Him.



I mentioned in the last of our eclipse facts for today that we get to experience total solar eclipses because of the apparent sizes of the sun and the moon, that even though the sun is so much larger than the moon, it sits exactly far enough away that we get to see this event.

Actually, there's one more fascinating detail here. The moon is slowly drifting away from Earth, and so eventually the moon will appear smaller than it does now. That means that millions of years in the future, if Earth is around that long, there will be no such thing as a total solar eclipse.

So not only does the moon sit exactly at the right place and at the exact size it needs to be, not only does the sun sit exactly where it needs to be at the exact size it needs to be, we also sit exactly where we need to be in space and in time to enjoy a total solar eclipse.

There's a level of perfection there that speaks very loudly.

But it's not just with eclipses that we find this. We know that the exact spot where Earth sits in our solar system makes it the only place where the conditions are just right for us to live.

The size of Earth is just right so that our gravity doesn't crush us or cause us to float away into the atmosphere. The atmosphere itself is just right so that we can breathe, and it protects us from all the gases and radiation floating in the universe that we really shouldn't be exposed to.

We are surrounded by other planets that do more than just give us pretty things to study and look at. These larger planets act as a shield of sorts that protect us from debris that flies around in space so that we're not getting pelted with rocks all the time.

All of this and more has to be balanced on a razor's edge so that life can exist. If anywhere along the course of time, the force of gravity or the mixture of gases in the universe fell to one side or another, life would not be possible.

That level of fine-tuning the conditions in our universe and on our planet really should tell us some amazing things.



One thing it should tell us is that God did not create all of this on a whim. There is a level of design here that we as humans really cannot even comprehend.

There is so much that goes into making life possible that simply cannot come from a chaotic and random universe, and every little detail has been cared for.

As we look out at the universe, as we learn more about what's out there, as we see events like total solar eclipses, we can see the handiwork of a God who works wonders – of a God that created all of this by speaking it into existence. A simple thought, a spoken word, and it appears.

The other thing all of this should tell us is how important we are to God, and how much He really loves us.

We've been looking at life zoomed out quite a bit this morning. We've been looking at the sun and moon and outer space and the universe. And that has told us how awesome our God is, how amazing His creation is.

But it's time to zoom back in. It's time to now refocus on what this means for us. We need to consider the biggest truth of all this morning.

We are important enough that God would create all of this so intricately and so carefully just so we can have life.

With how big the universe is, with how many amazing things God has created inside of it, God wants most of all to know us. You and I are the most important things in the entirety of creation. God wants a personal relationship with us.

And you know, if you ever think about the vastness of creation and start to feel small in the grand scheme of things, I think that's the cure. I think that's what can give us the right perspective.

God has created all of this, He has done it all, so that we can live – because we are that special to Him. And out of everything else that God has made, His focus is on you.

That shouldn't make you feel small at all. It should make you feel like there's a God who sees and loves and cares for you. It should make you feel like you are very important to the One who made everything.

And I think it should make you feel like you want to live your life for Him in return.

So when we think about things like total solar eclipses, when we hear about exciting scientific discoveries of far-off stars and planets, I don't think we're meant to feel small and unimportant at all.

I think we're meant to see an entire creation that tells of the glory and the majesty of our God.

I think we're meant to see an entire universe screaming to us that in the eyes of the One who made it, there's nothing more important in the entire thing than you and me.

This past week was truly a beautiful cosmic reminder of a great and wonderful truth, and one that we don't get to see very often.

And so I hope when you think back on this event, or any time you hear about something like it in the future, that you think of our God of Wonders, of His majesty, and of His love for us.

And all of God's people said...