

## **“I will show wonders in heaven above” (Acts 2:19)**

An elderly gentleman looked out of his window one night and saw a man trying to break into a car. He immediately called the police who later caught the man with the stolen vehicle. When the case was brought to court the old man had to stand witness and was cross examined by the defendant’s lawyer. He tried to make out that the senior citizen was too old and too visually impaired to be a credible witness against his client. “Tell me, sir,” he said, “at your age, just how far can you see at night?” The old man thought for a moment and then replied, “Well, I can see the moon – how far is that?” Of course his answer not only tells us something about his eyesight (and wit), but also about the moon itself. Along with the sun and the stars the moon is visible to all which is why God made them for signs in the heavens. “...and let them be for signs and seasons,” says Genesis 1:14, which refers not only to calendar events like the Jewish festivals which are determined by lunar cycles, but also to other events of Biblical significance. Take, for instance, the darkening of the sun at the Exodus or the star which signalled the Saviour’s birth to the Magi. Both of these incidents were marked by ‘heavenly heralds’. And in the future this will also be the case. The prophets have long foretold that in the last days there will sky-signs when events relating especially to Israel are taking place on earth. Joel said, “*The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD*” (2:31) and the Lord Jesus Himself said, “*there shall be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars...*” (Luke 21:25).

### **Signs of things to come?**

It is because of this that some prophecy buffs are keeping one eye on the sky. Take Pastor Mark Biltz of El-Shaddai Ministries as a case in point. He recently made a discovery of ‘astronomical’ significance. In 2008 he saw a photo of a blood moon, caused by a total lunar eclipse, hanging in the night sky over the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. This apocalyptic-like image stirred his curiosity and sent him to NASA’s web-site to investigate both solar (sun) and lunar (moon) eclipses in the future. What he found was intriguing. He discovered that during 2014 and 2015 there are four lunar eclipses in a row (called a ‘tetrad’ by NASA) and each of them are on Jewish feast days. The first is in 2014 on Passover and the second on the first day of Tabernacles – the opening and closing feasts of the Jewish year. Exactly the same thing happens again in 2015 on the first and last festivals making it four in a row. ‘How unusual is that?’ thought Pastor Blitz. When he went into the archive of past eclipses he found a surprise. Apparently, the last time there was a tetrad where the eclipses landed on Passover and Tabernacles was 1967-68, when Israel regained Jerusalem. The time before that was in 1949-50, just after the establishment of Israel in 1948. Prior to that there were no tetrads on Jewish feast days in the 1800s, 1700s, 1600s at all - and none in 1500s *over Passover and Tabernacles*. In 1493 there was a tetrad on

Passover and Tabernacles just after Columbus sailed for America and the Jews were being thrown out of Spain (on the Jewish feast day, 9<sup>th</sup> Av 1492). Looking at the record it would seem to suggest that a tetrad on these Jewish feast days marks some major event regarding the Jewish people and this may well be the case in 2014-15. Whilst there are other tetrads expected this century none fall on Jewish festivals. Pastor Blitz seems to have identified something significant to take note of for the future. Some have speculated that it could refer to the events of the sixth Seal judgment mentioned in Revelation 6:12. This verse says, *"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair and the moon became like blood."* We'll have to see. If it is, then of course the Rapture could be closer than some ever imagined...

### **A coincidence?**

In my opinion eclipses are amazing anyway. Did you know that earth is the only place in the solar system to view a total eclipse of either the sun or moon? According to The Daily Telegraph, June 23 1999, *"The basic requirement of an eclipse is that three bodies should become aligned such that the middle body completely obscures the luminous body from an observer on the surface of the third body. In our own case – Sun, Moon and Earth – the Sun, though 400 times larger than the Moon, also happens to be 400 times further away, which is why they appear the same size....Only two systems [possess] the correct ratio: our Moon and Prometheus, which orbits Saturn. But Prometheus is a lumpy rock with an orbit more rapid than that of our Moon. Eclipses on Saturn are incomplete because Prometheus is an irregular shape – and they would be too fast for the acclimatisation of the observer's eye to darkness. It's spooky but it's true – we live in the best place in the solar system for viewing a perfect solar eclipse."* Coincidence? You decide. To me it looks like deliberate design of the Highest order.

### **Solar eclipse 2008, 2009, 2010**

What makes all this even more relevant is that (at the time of writing) we are currently in a three year period of three solar eclipses, one of which is expected to be the longest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The first took place on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008; the second (the longest) just recently on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009; and the third due 11<sup>th</sup> July 2010. The interesting thing is that although these dates vary on our Gregorian calendar *they all fall on the same day on the Jewish calendar.* Each year they occur on the 1<sup>st</sup> Av. This may not mean that much to most people, but its significance will not be lost on the observant Jew because this date falls right in the middle of a period known as 'The Dire Straits'. This three week period lasts from the 17<sup>th</sup> Tamuz through to the 9<sup>th</sup> Av on the Hebrew calendar. As the name suggests, it marks some tragic events in Israel's history. It is believed that Israel worshipped the golden calf

during this period and that Nebuchadnezzar broke through the Jerusalem's walls before destroying the temple of Solomon. The 17<sup>th</sup> Tamuz was also the day the recent Lebanon war broke out. We will have to see what significant events take place concerning Israel over the next twelve months but the signs look ominous.

### **More 'coincidences'...?**

Apparently no more than seven eclipses can take place in a single year – four of the sun and three of the moon, which is quite unusual. However this did happen on two occasions in the previous century: 1917 and 1973. Again both dates significant to Israel, the first marking General Allenby's conquest of the Holy Land in World War I thereby opening the way for the return of the Jew to his homeland; and the second, Israel's victory in the Yom Kippur war when she was attacked by her Arab neighbours.

In 1998 the nation of Israel celebrated the 3000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jerusalem, and in that year no less than three blood moons fell, the first on Purim. Since then she has been in almost continual conflict with Hamas and Hezbollah. There was also a blood moon on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2000 when the Middle East Summit was taking place at Camp David under the organisation of President Bill Clinton. By now you are probably getting the idea...

### **Other signs in the heavens**

But it's not just eclipses that are deemed to be significant. Other events seem to be signs in the heavens as well, some almost supernatural. The historian Josephus records how there was a double sign in the heavens in AD70, the year of Jerusalem's destruction under General Titus. He writes, *"Thus there was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year."* ("The Wars of the Jews" 6:5:289). You can't help thinking of the angel with the drawn sword that David saw in 1 Chronicles 21:16 when you read that. Certainly the shape of the sword appears to have been significant when you consider what was going on in Jerusalem at the time.

One that is of particular interest to me is the Shoemaker-Levy comet which crashed into Jupiter in July 1994. 'SL9', as it was known, broke into fragments up to 2km (1.2 miles) in diameter and slammed into the planet at approximately 60 km (37 miles) per second. Apparently, after the impact of the first fragment instruments on the space telescope Galileo detected a fireball which reached a peak temperature of about 24,000k . A huge dark spot appeared on Jupiter's surface, the size of which was equivalent to the earth's radius. A chain of twenty-one other impacts took place over the next six days making this

probably the most violent event witnessed by modern astronomers. What was taking place on Earth at the time? The Oslo Accords, designed to set a framework for Israeli-Palestinian 'negotiations'. What many people may not know is that in July this year (2009) *exactly fifteen years later* another meteor crashed into Jupiter in a similar way. The impact scar was discovered by an Australian amateur astronomer called Anthony Wesley and has since been followed up by NASA's infrared Telescope Facility in Hawaii. The full significance of this in astronomical terms has yet to be realised ...and the same can be said as to whether it was a sign relating to Israel again. But even as this article is being written American envoy's are visiting Israel and, no doubt, putting pressure on Binyamin Netanyahu.

There is so much more that could be said about other possible 'signs in the heavens' and the subject is of huge importance to our understanding of the end times. However, the greater issue now is, 'What should our reaction be?' Most of all, not fear but faith. God is in control of world events and heavenly wonders. "Thus says the LORD: 'Do not learn the way of the Gentiles; Do not be dismayed at the signs of the heaven, for the Gentiles are dismayed at them.'" [Jer.10:2]. God's signs are not sent to alarm us but alert us. Let's make sure that if our spiritual lives are 'flat-lining' we get ourselves sorted out quickly and be ready for the Lord's return. As the Scripture says, "I will show wonders in heaven above...The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:19-21)

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