

No Fear: Solar Eclipses, Omens and Superstition

From the dawn of human history, people have looked in wonder, awe and fear at solar eclipses, comets, meteor showers and other celestial phenomena. The ancients considered such phenomena to be omens of good fortune or of impending disaster and death.

Solar Eclipses and Superstition

Kings and emperors would go to war or make peace depending on how they interpreted such phenomena. According to the historian, Herodotus, a battle between the Medes and Lydians was interrupted by a solar eclipse in 585 B.C. Both sides interpreted the darkness as a sign the gods were displeased and they made peace.

The Roman historian, Dio Cassius, tells how a bright comet with a long tail streaked across the sky in A.D. 79. Such a phenomenon was considered a sign of the death of a king and Cassius considered it an omen portending the approaching death of the emperor Vespasian.

When this was mentioned to the emperor, who was sick at the time, he brushed it off and said the omen was for the Parthian king with whom he was at war. Alluding to the comet's long tail, Vespasian insisted the omen could not be for him, for he was bald. Nonetheless, he died shortly thereafter.

God's People are Different

This sort of superstition and fear of heavenly phenomena was not to be a part of God's people. God spoke through the prophet Jeremiah, "Thus says the Lord, Do not learn the way of the nations; do not be terrified at the signs of heaven, although the nations are terrified at them" (Jer. 10:2). God

wanted His ancient people to trust Him and not live in fear of heavenly signs as did the heathen.

The following prophecy by Isaiah was given in regards to the approaching fall and destruction of Babylon. The Babylonians were known for their study of astronomy, which they mixed with astrology and superstition. The prophecy shows that God was not impressed with their astrological activity, and He said through Isaiah,

You are wearied in the multitude of your counsels; let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up and save you from these things that shall come upon you. Surely they shall be as stubble, the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame; it shall not be coal to be warmed by nor a fire to sit before (Isa. 47:13-14).

Eclipses at the End of the Age

Yes, the magi, who were probably Babylonian astrologers, were led by a “star” (a comet perhaps?) to the new-born Messiah. This, however, instead of being an affirmation of their astrological practice, simply shows that God honors honest seekers of truth.

The “star” they saw was no natural comet, for Matthew says, The star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child lay. A comet, as we know them, would not guide someone to a specific location and then remain stationary. There is a supernatural element to this. This was God’s GPS system leading these truth-seekers to the precise location where truth had been born.

This supernatural element should also be considered when reading the words of Jesus concerning the end of the age in Luke 21:25, where He said, “There will be signs in the sun and

the moon and the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring." Matthew 24:29 elaborates on this, saying, "'The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.'"

I see no reason to assume that this describes a natural eclipse and meteor shower that can be scientifically explained. These are supernatural phenomena that cannot be predicted by astronomical calculations or explained as natural phenomena. They are supernatural events that cause perplexity and dismay on sophisticated planet earth.

No Fear

So, is the Aug. 21 solar eclipse an omen of portending judgment, destruction, repentance or revival? Those who think so will probably find what they are looking for in the days ahead. However, I am confident we will get a much better sense of the future and God's will for our lives by prayerfully reading our Bibles, listening to the Holy Spirit and letting Jesus be our example and guide. As my friend Myles Holmes, says, "Keep your eyes on the Son, not the sun, moon and stars." {eoa}

Dr. Eddie Hyatt *is an author, historian and ordained minister. His book Pilgrims and Patriots, documents how America was birthed out of a great, spiritual awakening and shows why she must have another such awakening to survive. It and other books by him are available from Amazon and his website at .*