

WD April 8, 2024

## “Over the Moon”

Today is a special day. Today is the day of the Solar Eclipse here in Indiana. I’ve picked up my eclipse glasses and I have a place to go to watch within the zone of totality. The zone of totality is something we have been hearing a lot about for the last few months. This zone of totality describes the area that is going to be totally dark when the eclipse happens. In a nutshell it’s the zone that has the best seats in the house. Well, since this will be the last eclipse over Indiana within many of our lifetimes, (2049 being the next one), I am going to try to experience this rare moment.

What role does the moon have in scripture? Well, Genesis 1:14-18 speaks of the moon as one of the “great lights” that God made on the fourth day. The moon is part of the system of “lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and...to mark sacred times, and days, and years...God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars.” The moon with all its phases is designed to mark the passing of time from day to day, month to month.

The new moons mentioned in scripture also marked the beginning of months in the lunar-based Hebrew calendar and signaled times for certain sacrifices. Numbers 28:11 speaks to the Israelites; “At the beginnings of your months, you shall offer a burnt offering to the LORD: two bulls from the herd, one ram, seven male lambs a year old without blemish...” In speaking about the Passover, we hear Psalm 81:3 says, “Sound the ram’s horn at the New Moon, and when the moon is full, on the day of our festival...” The time that the moon marks is often associated with a festival or sacrifice. Because of the moon’s association with Passover, it is possible that a full moon may have been in the night sky on the night Jesus was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. Having just celebrated Passover the timing may have been just right for the moon to be full.

On another interesting front the moon is also associated with Joel 2:31: “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” (See also Revelation 6:12). The moon seems to also have a role in the future for marking the end of time when the Lord returns on judgement day. In speaking about the restoration of Israel from Babylon Isaiah 30:26 marks the occasion with a day when “the moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter.” It certainly appears that the moon is a marker of significant moments in our future as well as our current calendar.

According to Wikipedia, The Moon is a planetary-mass object or satellite planet. Its mass is 1.2% that of the Earth, and its diameter is 3,474 km (2,159 mi), roughly one-quarter of Earth's (about as wide as Australia.) The moon also has a significant role to play on our oceans. The high tide is caused by the gravitational pull of the moon. The moon effectively causes the tides to bulge out on both sides of the planet. (See illustrations from Nasa sight-- <https://science.nasa.gov/moon/tides/>). The earth seems to be interdependent upon the Earth and the Earth to the moon. And based on all the pot marks and craters on the surface of this rock it also seems to me to be a nice little shield from various garbage floating about. The science of it all is pretty amazing. The Lord has been very creative with this lesser light.

As spiritual lessons go the moon as bright and as amazing as any full moon may shine it is still just a rock with no actual light of its own. All it can do is reflect the light of the sun. Without the sun there is no light of the moon. Human beings are likewise a reflection of the Light of the Son, Jesus. We are the light of the world says John 1:4-5, but only in so far as we are people of Christ. We are created in His image made to reflect that image. Seeing us is to see Jesus. We are not to be the center of attention but to remind others of the greater light of Christ.

Years ago, during a season when I worked at Yosemite National Park in California, I once got the opportunity to hike up to the top of half-dome in the full moon light in July. Half-dome in Yosemite is basically a huge bald granite mountain. The face of mountain facing the Yosemite Valley is flat but the 11.5 acres on top is as bald and rocky as it gets. My friend and I got to the top of the mountain at about midnight. The best part about it was the full moon. The light of the moon reflected off the granite so brightly that the whole mountain seemed to glow in the dark. It was so bright that neither of us needed a flashlight to see. It will always be a once in a lifetime experience that I will remember all my life.

Today’s eclipse is a once in a lifetime experience as well. The hope is for us to be the light of Christ to someone in a way that we can leave a lasting impression as well. You see, the moon is a daily reminder of a

greater Gospel truth. God's people are designed to reflect the greater light, a light that shines in the darkness. As followers we are the lesser light. We are a light in the darkness only because of Jesus. The design of who we are as God's people is to shine in a way that the people see our good works but then give God the credit for the goodness that is demonstrated. To see us God willing they see Christ.

It should not be lost on us that Jesus Himself also represented the Father in a similar fashion as well. In John 12:44-46 Jesus cries out, "Whoever believes in me does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me." <sup>45</sup> The one who looks at me is seeing the one who sent me. <sup>46</sup> I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." In John 14:9 when Philip asks Jesus to show him the Father Jesus immediately reminds the disciples, "If you have seen me you have seen the Father as well." This is the same Jesus who said, "I am the light of the world." What that means for us is spelled out in 2 Corinthians 3:18; "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Just as the moon is tied to an intricately and brilliant eco system which relies on the light of our sun so too we are part of a greater body of work by our Lord. We too rely on the Light of Christ and we too are part of the greater body of work by our Lord in the saving of many souls.

I don't read much into eclipses except that they are a marvel and a unique conjunction of God's creation. I do think however that the moon holds for us Christians a strong example of what we are designed to be as image bearers. We are not here independently in this world. We are part of a body as much as the moon is part of a greater celestial creation and together we groan for the Lord's return. In the meantime, we are designed to influence those closest to us much like the moon affects the tides. We are to be a reflection of the greater light; no light of our own, but made to reflect a greater image than ourselves. And just as the light of the moon is evidence in the night that light is still shining Christians are evidence in this dark world that light is still with us. Praise God for the moon and for its humble service in our night sky.

Pastor Matt Woods  
John 3:30