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THE SURE WORD

By Jonnie Hutchison

THE ECLIPSE, A SIGN?

It seems that every time some spectacular natural event occurs, someone declares it to be a certain sign that the coming of Jesus is imminent. Whether it be an earthquake, war or the eclipse of the sun, such occurrences are depicted as “signs of the times” which herald the second coming of Christ. It does not seem to occur to those who express such a view that these so-called “signs of the times” have been occurring since the beginning of time itself. How many times has there been a total eclipse of the sun somewhere upon the earth through the ages? What would warrant the conclusion that the total eclipse of last Monday is a ‘sign’ of the imminent return of Christ while all previous ones were not?

The Bible compares Jesus’ second coming to that of a thief. -"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). A thief is not going to let you know he is coming to break into your home before he does so. The thief does not give “signs” of the time of his coming. Inspiration declares such is true of the Lord’s coming. The inspired writer declared that it was not necessary for him to write of the times and seasons of the Lord’s coming because he would come as a thief in the night, suddenly and without prior notice. (See also 2 Peter 3:10).

The “signs of the times” that many believe will mark the imminent return of Christ are largely based upon a misunderstanding of Matthew 24. Rather than depicting the second coming of Christ, this chapter describes the signs that would precede the destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple when the Romans destroyed it in AD 70. Notice that the events pictured in this chapter were limited to Judea while the second coming of Christ is a world-wide event. Verse 16 reads, “Then let those in Judea flee to the mountains.” The “signs” were given so that followers of Jesus could flee from the city of Jerusalem and escape the destruction that followed. This hardly fits the description of Christ’s coming, both as that a thief and the fact that His second coming will not be limited to the area of Judea. “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.” (Revelation 1:7).

Rather than being concerned with the “signs of the times” we should be concerned with following God’s plan for our salvation revealed in the New Testament so that we can be prepared whenever our Lord comes. Heed the warning of Jesus, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:44).