

# Meeting With Christ

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Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

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Based on sermons of Pasteur Eric Chang

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## THERE WILL BE SIGNS IN THE SUN, MOON AND STARS

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### Luke 21:25-27

The most significant event yet to occur in human history is the return of Christ to earth. This will be preceded by signs 'in the sun and moon and stars,' signs that will happen in the heavenly places. Jesus taught these signs to enable His followers to be prepared and strengthened when they take place. This is what we read in Luke 21:25-27.

*Luke 21:25. And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,  
26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.  
27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

This is a time of universal upheaval that will bring upon the nations their own experience of divine judgment. Signs will be seen in the sun, the moon and the stars. In this particular passage, we should not take 'the sun, moon and stars' in some spiritualized sense. Some of the signs of Jesus' return will happen in nature. The apostle Paul tells us in Romans 8:22 that the whole universe had been affected by humanity's fallen predicament. *For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.* Thus, the entire universe will also be involved when humanity is changed. A variety of changes will be seen. The sun will turn dark. The moon will have no light. The stars will fall from the sky. Heavenly bodies will be shaken. In Revelation, in his vision of the end times, John gave a very similar description. *When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black ..., the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth ...; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up'* (Revelation 6:12-14).

### Signs of God's activity

'Sign' as natural occurrences is used in this sense in Genesis 1:14. *Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years.* God gave the stars, the sun and the moon for signs upon the earth. They serve as signs of the different changes which happen in our natural environment.

But a sign, in the Scriptures, is not limited to natural occurrences. It is also used to describe divine activity. The Bible speaks of signs of God's activity in the world by which He gives a message to mankind.

Essentially, a sign is a message conveyed by an action or a deed. It can be compared to the message that comes by words that we hear. When we hear a message being preached, God's word is

being conveyed to us by sound, i.e., by what we can hear. We receive God's message through the ear. In Luke 21:25, Jesus is saying that in the last days, there will be signs which we will be able to see in the heavens. These will not be merely natural occurrences, but occurrences of the kind in which God Himself will do things in the heavens that will be visible to the human eye.

Let's take an example. When the Lord Jesus was crucified, a certain sign appeared in the heavens. Luke 23:45: *The sun stopped shining*. There, at noonday, Jesus died. And we are told that the sun did not shine. For several hours, there was darkness over the whole land. By this, God indicated to those who have crucified His Son His displeasure at their actions. He was warning them by a sign that they could see and experience that they had done something very bad, not against man, but against God.

This is exactly the point of Luke 21:25. God will show again this kind of sign in the end time to indicate that He is displeased and that judgment is about to take place.

In a previous lesson, we saw that God will allow evil to go so far and no further. And in the OT, we find that when it has reached a certain stage, God actually gives signs in the heavens to indicate that His judgment is about to occur. This is seen particularly in the book of Joel.

### **The sun and the moon are darkened**

In the book of Joel, the reference to signs in the sun and the stars occurs quite a number of times. We will look at a few passages. Joel 2:10-11.

*Joel 2:10. Before them the earth quakes, the heavens tremble, the **sun** and the **moon** grow dark, and the **stars** lose their brightness.*

*11 And the Lord utters His voice before His army; surely His camp is very great, for strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, and who can endure it?*

'The day of the Lord' that we read in v. 11 is the day of God's judgment. And we notice that immediately before God's day of judgment, the sun, the moon and the stars are darkened. There you have the warning signs.

You see, God does not do this to frighten us. He does this because He loves us so much. These signs are meant to cause men to understand, if they still have eyes to see, that their time is up. If they do not want to listen with their ears, then will they look with their eyes? Will they see that they are walking on the road that leads to destruction, and that God is trying one last time to make them turn back?

If we read a little further down, in Joel 2:30-31, we find the same thing.

*Joel 2:30. And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire, and columns of smoke.*

*31 The **sun** will be turned into darkness, and the **moon** into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.*

The dreadful day of the Lord will be preceded by divine signs of impending judgment. The sun will become black. And the moon will become as red as blood, a poetic way of saying that the moon will stop shining.

A similar expression is found in Joel 3:14-15.

*Joel 3:14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.*

*15 The **sun** and the **moon** shall be darkened, and the **stars** shall withdraw their shining.*

*The moon shall be darkened* is the same as the 'moon turned into blood.' The sun, the moon, the stars, all these planets will no longer shine. And in each case, we have this relation to the day of the Lord. *For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision* (v. 14). The day of the Lord is a day of decision when God will decide the fate of the people. This is also a warning that we have to make a decision before it is too late. We must make up our mind as to where we stand with God. If we keep postponing our decision, one day the door will be shut. The day of opportunity will pass. Then the day of judgment will come.

The same kind of signs are mentioned in Revelation. Let's take Revelation 8:12.

*Revelation 8:12. Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.*

This passage describes what will happen at the blast of the fourth trumpet judgment. Some kind of unusual eclipse is going to happen in the heaven. We have the picture of the sun, the moon and the stars losing one third of their light. Whatever that means, the event will be a divine judgment. God will be behind it. His purpose is to lead men to repent and, if they do not, to judge them for all the evil acts against His name.

So it is important to understand that the signs in the heavens are not strictly natural signs, signs of natural occurrences. They are divinely instituted signs that God will create in the heavens and which have no natural explanation at all. It is just like the darkening of the sun at the time of the Lord's crucifixion. There is no reason, naturally speaking, why the sun should be darkened at noon. And these are the things that God will do prior to Jesus' coming.

## **The distress of the nations**

The next point we notice is that these events will have a remarkable effect on mankind. Let's return to Luke 21 to see what is happening in the world at the same time. We read that on the earth, there will be *distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves*.

What does all this mean? What is this 'roaring of the sea and the waves'? This can be taken in one of two ways, and probably both are intended. Some things on earth have an astronomical explanation. For example, the tidal activity on earth is the result of gravitational forces by the moon, the sun and the rotation of the earth. Therefore this 'roaring of the sea and the waves' may well be connected to the happenings in the sun, the moon and the stars. There may be storms upon the earth, or tidal waves of enormous magnitude.

But when we study the Scriptures, we discover that this is not all that is intended to be. We discover that these events may be a pictorial way of describing the tumult of the nations, i.e., the great unrest within the world. As an example, we can read Psalm 65:6-8.

*Psalm 65:6. Who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength,  
7 who stilled **the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations.**  
8 Those living far away fear your wonders; where morning dawns and evening fades you call forth songs of joy.*

Notice the 'roaring of the seas.' This is not to be understood literally. Those words describe 'the turmoil of the nations.' Hebrew poetry uses parallelism. i.e., when you have two statements made parallel to each other, one explains the other. So here the 'turmoil of the nations' explains what is meant by the 'roaring of the seas' that God stills.

This is also found in Isaiah 17:12-13.

*Isaiah 17:12 Alas, the uproar of many peoples who roar like the roaring of the seas, and the rumbling of nations who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!*

*13 The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters, but He will rebuke them and they will flee far away, and be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind, or like whirling dust before a gale.*

Notice again the parallelism. The sea and the people are compared to each other. 'The roaring of the seas' is 'the uproar of the people.' This comparison of 'sea' and 'people' is very important for the understanding of the book of Revelation. When John writes that *he saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads ...* (Revelation 13:1), the 'sea' represents the people, the nations. He is not talking about the literal ocean.

All this shows that there is an intended picture: the roaring of the seas pictures the anguish of the nations. You see, there will be a disturbance of nature occurring upon the earth. But in addition to that, there will be great unrest among the nations in the days immediately preceding the second coming of Christ. So great will be the disorder that people, we are told, will be in total 'perplexity.'

This word 'perplexity' is a very strong word. If we want to bring out the picture of the Greek word, it literally means to be at your wits' end. 'Perplexity,' in Greek, is *aporia*. *Aporia* is made of two parts: (1) the 'a' privative, which negates what follows; (2) and *poria*, which comes from the word *poros*. *Poros* means a passing, a crossing. It is a place where you cross a river. *Aporia* means 'no crossing,' 'no way through,' 'no passage.' There is nowhere to go. You are at a dead end. You are at your wits' end. This is what the word 'perplexity' means. In those last days, mankind will experience the feeling of total desperation because it will realize that there is no way out whatsoever.

### **Fainting with fear**

In the next verse, v. 26, we read about *men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken*. The Greek word for 'fainting,' *apopsucho*, is also a very strong word. It means 'to stop breathing,' 'to be out of breath.' You are out of breath in such a way that you pass out, you faint. And if you are deprived of oxygen long enough, you will die. Actually, the word can literally mean to pass out in the sense of dying.

Dying from fear. That could be a translation of this passage. Fear of what? Fear of what is about to happen. There is a deep sense of foreboding that something terrible is about to happen. They look at what is happening in the heavens. They look at what is happening in the world. And there will be a general feeling among mankind that something absolutely terrible is going to happen soon which will affect the whole world. They will be right. God's judgment is about to descend upon the world.

Mighty things will be happening in the sky. All kinds of signs will be given to mankind to see. The only problem is that when those signs appear, it is rather too late for most people. If they have resisted the gospel all their life, it is unlikely that they would change at that moment, in spite of all the signs in the world. These signs will only bring terror in the heart of the unbelievers.

And then, they will see what they fear the most. V. 27: *And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory*. The one person they did not expect to see will be the one they will see. They never believed in Jesus, crucified and resurrected. All that story was just total nonsense to them. And lo and behold, there He is, Jesus coming in a cloud! On that day, with power and glory, the Lord Jesus will defeat Satan and all evil, and establish His eternal reign.

Can you picture that in your mind? Or does this sound like a dream, a fairy tale? For those who think that this all mythology, well, let me tell you, it has a way of coming true. Jesus will come a second time as surely as He came the first time.