

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.*

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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The Celestials & Catastrophism

The last issue was about *The Countdown* to the beginning of the end. The question is: If September 8th is the beginning of a season that will lead to the end, possibly of our present age, or what some call *Man's Day*, will there be some obvious signs or events that we can point to prove it is the beginning point? I do not know. It is possible, even probable, that nothing significant will happen on the 8th. Give it time to manifest. If this is truly of the Lord, it will come.

The next question is: What should we expect to happen during this coming season? Will there be great failings of man's institutions or of governments? Will the global financial system crash? Will there be war with North Korea involving nuclear weapons? Will World War III come? Will Jerusalem be destroyed? Will there be revolutions? Will there be a dramatic increase in natural disasters - hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, volcanoes, etc., accompanied by famine, pestilence, disease? Will there be a dreaded pandemic? Without doubt, given enough time, some of these and much more will occur, for these are found in the cycles of man's history. Nations fail, governments fail, institutions fail, currencies crash, markets fall, wars come and go, peace remains elusive, hurricanes and tornadoes and other weather events come at will, and people die for all sorts of reasons. This is life.

But, what about the signs in the heavens?

On August 21, 2017, many in the United States and those who traveled from other lands experienced the effects of total darkness caused by the so-called *Great Eclipse of 2017*. Prior to this, the world witnessed four so-called *Blood Moons* and two Solar Eclipses from 2014-2015. One more total eclipse is to arrive in the US in 2024 that will pass across the country from the southwest to the northeast. Once completed, the two eclipses combined will have marked an X across the country with Missouri at the center of the X.

Are they signs from God? Is God sending us a message? Are more to come? Leading up to these celestial events, there was a lot of prophetic chatter about what these signs in the heavens portend to happen on earth. Books were written, the so-called *prophetic* appeared on talk shows, and many websites were abuzz with more prophetic utterances. Now, people are starting to talk about the seven-year period (2017-2024) between the two solar eclipses. Is this going to be a time of tribulation? Is the Holy Spirit going to be poured out? Some are even looking to the near term, specifically September 23, 2017, when there will a specific alignment of the stars. The sun will be in the constellation Virgo and the moon will be at Virgo's feet in a portrayal of Revelation 12 and the birth of the man child. Is this when the so-called *rapture* occurs? Is this the beginning of the apocalypse that so many are expecting? Finally, for the tin foil-hat crowd, is Planet Nibiru or Planet X, the unseen infrared planet that the government knows about but conspires to keep secret, finally going to arrive and smash into earth, destroying all life? Frankly, sometimes I feel like I could join the tin foil-hats; at least they think outside the box and are not caught up in orthodoxy. Besides, I enjoy a good conspiracy; it helps to clear the cobwebs of orthodoxy.

It might surprise you, but I consider this last point far more interesting and possibly more pertinent to the season that is upon us. Before you get the tin foil-hat for me, let me explain. All of the examples and questions cited above, along with many more that could be posed, are known entities to all of us who have spent any time on this planet or who have read the history of mankind. There is nothing new under the sun. As the saying goes, history repeats itself, and it has done this over and over again in cycles that can be tracked and even predicted.

So, the big question is this: If God wants to get our attention, how is He going to do this? How has He done this before? Is He going to just pick a previously manifested event and repeat it? How will we know this is from Him? Or, is He simply going to take many of these events and increase them in frequency and intensity until we think few will survive? After all, right now in the US there are raging fires in the west, a recovery underway in Texas, and now a mega-hurricane named *Irma* heading our way. This might start to get our attention. Or, is He going to expect us to look into the heavens and study the zodiacs, as some are doing for September 23rd and take well-known alignments of the stars as signs? But how or why would this get our attention? After all, the stars and the planets have coursed through space in known and predictable orbits for some time now. Some say they have been lined up this way for mega years, while one school of thought says they have coursed this way since 701 BC. Take your pick.

This leads to the one thing that I believe would be the most effective way for God to get our attention and is the most likely arena in which God will act in such a way so as to impact man's stability on earth. That place is the celestials. Think about it; God does not need a secret planet hidden on the back side of the sun to swing our way and crash into earth to catch our attention or, even worse, to annihilate us entirely. This latter suggestion goes against the grain of God who is love. Of course, He could send a large meteorite or asteroid our way that hits us or makes a mighty close flyby to shake things up a bit. But what about the planets? What if there were a subtle or even major shift in the orbit of one or more planets in our solar system? Could God do such a thing? Of course!

The question is: Has God done such a thing in the past, that is, changed the orbit of planets to bring terror on earth as well as dramatic, even catastrophic upheaval through off-the-chart quakes? Consider the major mountain ranges on our planet, such as the Himalayas. Did they develop such great heights due to a gradual process over billions of years? Orthodox theories of our day say yes. This theory is held within *gradualism* and/or *uniformitarianism*. But there is one theory called *planetary catastrophism* that theorizes that our planet experienced catastrophic events from about 9,900 BC to 701 BC. During this period, it is believed that Mars was in a much different orbit and made flybys (passovers) over the earth that ranged from 15,000 to 60,000 miles out on a 54-year cycle with 108-year cycles causing catastrophic upheavals on earth and 540-year cycles causing mega-catastrophic upheavals, the type that creates huge mountain ranges, causes massive floods, and alters the magnetic poles of earth. Apart from whether this is a valid scientific theory or not, one reason why it has not been accepted by the scientific community is that it challenges the theory of evolution and leans toward creationism. The scientific community is not much different from the theological community; both fight over certain views (theory, doctrine) until one side prevails over the other and their view becomes orthodoxy. It doesn't mean it is the truth or the best view; it simply means one side prevailed. In the past, among so-called *Christians*, sometimes the winner prevailed by labeling the other side a heretic and burning them at the stake. Sometimes the religious-institutional system challenged even the scientists. In 1642, the famed Galileo faced the Catholic Church *Inquisition* for his belief in the *Copernican System* (the sun is the center of the universe). He was labeled a heretic and placed under house arrest until he died in 1648.

Back to planetary catastrophism; there is a book titled *Catastrophism and the Old Testament, The Mars-Earth Conflicts* by Donald Wesley Patten (1988, Pacific Meridian Publishing Company). It may be out of print but used copies are available online. In his book, Mr. Patten, who is a creationist, proposes that many of the catastrophic events (e.g., Noahic flood) in the Old Testament were the result of a heavenly/celestial war between Earth and Mars in what were Mars flybys or passovers. There is too much detail to properly summarize the book, but one point caught my attention. The ancient prophets often used what theologians call *poetic language* that was not meant to be literal. However, Patten proposes that, in some cases, this language is more than this, for it describes a celestial event that literally caused havoc on earth. Consider Isaiah as one example: **The earth is broken asunder, the earth is split through, the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard and it totters like a shack, for its transgression is heavy upon it, and it will fall, never to rise again** (Isaiah 24.19-20). As a child and years later as an elder, Isaiah might have experienced or seen the effects of two flybys, the last being in 701 BC. If this theory has merit, the implications in our understanding of the ancient prophets is profound. To me, it is fascinating.

Regardless, the point I want to leave with you is that God may manifest His hand through the one thing that scientists reject and, frankly, we Christians know so little about. The Creator knows how to align the planets and change their orbits to bring about His judgments. As the Lord told Abraham: **"Now look toward the heavens."** Perhaps we should do likewise. The judgment of God may come from the celestials.