



March 1, 2024

A Closer Look at the Book of Joel

Warm hellos once again friends, brethren, fellow laborers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

I love this time of year. We are welcoming spring here in lower Alabama! The spring equinox is at hand here and we're enjoying seeing flowers break forth, and the birds and squirrels are busy. I saw another Anole lizard yesterday as he scurried to safety at my presence. All welcome signs.

Last Friday evening I mentioned that I've discussed in messages the background of David as a shepherd. While caring for the flock he oversaw, we discussed that David talked with God in prayer, and also mused, meditated, and pondered the heavens, stars, and how small in comparison man indeed is. (Psalm 8:3-7)

We also discussed a few scriptures that describe some profound astronomical events that will take place in the future, including the sun becoming dark, and the moon turning to blood. "*The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.*" (Joel 2:31)

I asked, what causes the moon to be turned to blood or rather its appearance to take on a reddish color? Is it caused by a total eclipse of the moon or by some other circumstance? To some this is a significant event.

Let's take a closer look at the book of Joel. Chapter one describes the devastation from locusts or grasshoppers accompanied by drought and crop failure. The drought has caused the grass and shrubs and trees to become dry and fires have consumed many of them. (v.19) The conditions are likened to those that will accompany the end time Day of the LORD. (v.15)

Chapter two refers to a time of war and describes a great army, comparing it to an army of locusts and the massive destruction it brings. The results of the destruction bring darkness and gloominess, clouds and thick darkness. (v.2) Fiery destruction is described. (v.3) The smoke, dust and debris that rises into the atmosphere obscures the light from the sun, moon and stars. (v.10)

I remember as a young lad singing a song during worship services on the Sabbath taken directly from these verses and thinking "my, how awful!"

Following an insert description of the positive and blessed future of God's regathered people, the events associated with the coming of the day of the LORD are again described. *"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD."* (Joel 2:30-31)

A logical explanation for the sun being darkened is the presence of thick clouds accompanied by smoke and dust in the atmosphere. The moon taking on a blood red appearance is also explainable by the presence of smoke, dust, and possible volcanic debris that has risen by winds and convection action into the atmosphere.

I have seen such a condition a few times while traveling in Central America. I remember too, when Mount St. Helens erupted on the morning of May 18, 1980, tremendous amounts of ash were spewed into the atmosphere and deposited over several states. Even areas over a hundred miles away had the daylight significantly darkened by the huge cloud of ash that rose upward and formed over a very large area.

One of my female classmates when I was in college showed us a video, where she noticed the unusual appearance of the sky. She found out when she arrived back home in Washington for a visit, that the mountain had blown off its top. The next

day there was a thick coating of ash everywhere for miles. The color of the appearance of the moon was also affected for several weeks. When there's a relatively full moon, the reddish color from the effects of the reflected sunlight coming through the dust laden atmosphere is even more accentuated. It is quite a site to see!

The next chapter of the book of Joel describes the events associated with the gathering of the nations to the area near Megiddo and their demise as they advance into the area of Jerusalem at the time of the return of the King of kings.

During this time of war, the appearance of the sun and moon will again be affected. "*The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.*" (Joel 3:15)

War brings destruction, fire and clouds of smoke, dust, and debris! In addition to the effects of the destruction from war and armies unleashing powerful weapons, the bowls of wrath will produce more unleashing of dust, smoke and debris into the air. The sun will be affected to unusually heat up the earth and cause fires. (Revelation 16:8) A supernatural darkness will then pervade the area occupied by the beast powers, obviously even during the usual daylight hours. (v.10) A huge earthquake will take place that will dramatically affect the face of the earth including the disappearance of mountains and islands. (v.18-20)

This will be an alarming time for all on the earth! We read in Matthew 24:29 where it links the timing of these events described in Joel 2:30-31 with the conclusion of the Great Tribulation and the events leading to the return of "the Son of man" at the sound of a trumpet. (Matthew 24:30-31)

Revelation 6 uses the device of opening 7 seals to unfold a scroll and introduce the succession of events leading to the Day of the Lord and then the return of Jesus Christ. When the sixth seal is opened the scroll will be unrolled to describe events like those of Joel 2:30-31 and Matthew 24:29 often termed "*heavenly signs.*"

We see described the future events of "*a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth . . .*" (v.12-13) We can understand why some of those who had read their Bibles thought the events back in 1799 and 1833 signaled the return of Christ. However, they needed to get a larger perspective and discern whether other events and circumstances were in place as prophesied.

You and I have to be careful about the appearance or prediction of signs and wonders and what they mean. Are they an isolated event or are they part of a pattern and associated with a bigger picture? Remember, Jesus told His disciples, "*So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near--at the doors!*" (Matthew 24:33).

Luke 21:36 (KJV) Reminds us "*Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.*"

Again, more importantly we must be about our Father's business. And as we come up to the Passover and Spring Feasts of the Lord, watch our own spiritual condition and continue to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

May His Peace be with you as we enter into the Sabbath created for mankind.

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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