

## In and Out of Darkness: America's Total Solar Eclipses

On August 21, 2017 and April 8 2024, separate total solar eclipses will cross the continental states of the United States of America. These are not the first or last eclipses to cross our country, but these two paths of totality will cross near a little town in Illinois called Makanda. Any one location on Earth will normally experience a total eclipse only every 360 to 410 years, so most people live their lives without seeing one where they live. Makanda gets two total eclipses in seven years, so it's kind of special.

How do we know these eclipses will happen at these times? We are able to predict them because eclipses happen at regular intervals. Galileo, Johann Kepler and Isaac Newton gave modern astronomers some of the first rules to understand planetary motion and mathematical equations for calculating the motion of celestial bodies. These laws of motion and their calculations allow us to use computer programs to look forward or backward in history to see how the stars looked on any given night from any place on earth and even to predict how the universe looks from other stars.

Even to the casual observer on Earth, the regular motion of the sun, moon and stars can be used to mark time, from the hour of the day or night to the passage of the seasons through the year. Many have believed that the sun and moon control the destinies of men, or that the stars in the universe have a predictive quality in the details of humans' lives, but is there really a purpose for the motions of the heavenly bodies,

the lights in the heavens, the observable universe outside the earth?

When God created the sun, moon and stars He told us the purpose: *"...to separate the day from the night. And...for signs and for seasons, and for days and years, and...to give light upon the earth."* (Genesis 1:14-15) This is what we see, the stars and sun and moon give us a clock to track the passage of time, days, seasons and years. The Bible tells us that God created all things through Jesus and keeps and upholds all things which exist through Him.<sup>1</sup> When God finished creating everything, he said it was "very good."<sup>2</sup> But modern astronomers have found that the universal clock seems to be winding down. The evidence seems to show that as the motions and processes of the stars and other "systems" continue to burn up energy, eventually all energy will be used. If God created a perfect clock, why does it lose time? The answer is also in Genesis: man's sin.

Part of the punishment for man's first sin, as recorded in Genesis 3, was a curse on the natural world, including death and decay.<sup>3</sup> The Bible later explains that the entire creation was *"subjected to futility"* and suffers a *"bondage to corruption"* and *"groans together... until now"* (Romans 8: 20-22).

When Adam and Eve sinned, they disobeyed God's clear command about eating the fruit from a specific tree,<sup>4</sup> and the Bible tells us that their punishment was passed to their family (all

of us), because we all sin.<sup>5</sup> That punishment is death, both physical and spiritual.<sup>6</sup> The physical death is when the spirit leaves the body,<sup>7</sup> but spiritual death is separation from God.<sup>8</sup>

Our spiritual death is like an eclipse, the brightness of the sun is like God's love for us. Psalm 19:6 says about the sun, *"there is nothing hidden from its heat."* God's love is also evident to everyone, just by looking at the world around us. Romans 1:20-21 tells us, *"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened."*

We are without excuse before God, our dark hearts are like the moon in an eclipse, keeping us from enjoying the benefits of the sun, just like our sin keeping us from enjoying the love of God.

It's true, we all sin, and if God had to condemn Adam and Eve for breaking one command, how do you think He will judge us after all our sins? If I only break one of the Ten Commandments,<sup>9</sup> I am as guilty as if I broke all of them.<sup>10</sup> Think about yourself, have you ever lied? Stolen? Used God's name in vain?

1 Hebrews 1:2-3; Colossians 1:16-17

2 Genesis 1:31

3 Genesis 3:17-19

4 Genesis 3:6, 12

5 Romans 5:12

6 Romans 6:23

7 James 2:26

8 Luke 13:26-28

9 Exodus 20:2-17

10 James 2:10

Committed adultery (even in your imagination<sup>11</sup>)? Most of us have broken a lot more than one commandment, so we each deserve God's judgment and punishment. Thankfully, eclipses only last a few minutes, but the punishment for our sin is forever. God is eternal, so the punishment for sinning against him must be eternal separation from him in Hell.<sup>12</sup>

But God knew His justice would require a punishment, so He made a way to forgive us. God said He would overcome the devil's lie through Eve's Seed, one of her descendants.<sup>13</sup> 2000 years ago Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled that promise. Being fully God<sup>14</sup> and fully man,<sup>15</sup> Jesus lived a perfect life,<sup>16</sup> obeyed every commandment and then willingly became the perfect sacrifice for the sin of the whole world when He died on the cross.<sup>17</sup> Then He proved that He overcame our sins by rising from the dead.<sup>18</sup>

The only way to get out of the darkness of sin is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who alone can deliver you from darkness of your sin. Then you will be His child, *"that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."* (1 Peter 2:9-10)

11 Matthew 5:28

12 Matthew 25:41

13 Genesis 3:15

14 Colossians 2:9

15 Romans 5:15

16 Hebrews 4:15

17 Colossians 1:19-20

18 Romans 4:25

So when you look at this physical eclipse of the sun, remember that it is your sin that darkens the world around you, that Jesus, the Creator of the sun and your Creator, paid the price to give you light.

Here is a simple way to act on what you believe: Tell someone else that you believe with all your heart that:

1. Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>19</sup>
2. You are a sinner who needs to turn from your sin.<sup>20</sup>
3. Jesus' death was sufficient punishment to pay the penalty for your sin.<sup>21</sup>
4. God raised Him back to life from death to prove that you are forgiven.<sup>22</sup>
5. This faith in God is now the motivation for all your actions.<sup>23</sup>

*But to you who fear My name  
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise  
With healing in His wings...*  
Malachi 4:2

If you want more information about God's creation and His love for you, visit the Favorite Links page at [www.familiesfromthebeginning.org](http://www.familiesfromthebeginning.org).

19 Acts 8:37, 1 John 4:15

20 Romans 3:1-12, 23

21 Hebrews 2:17, 1 John 2:2

22 Romans 10:9-10, Acts 17:30-31

23 Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:13

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