

Blood Moons During Israel's Next Year-week

Prof. Johan Malan, Middelburg, South Africa (June 2008)

Scripture references are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise stated.

Pastor Mark Biltz, a Messianic Jew of El Shaddai Ministries near Washington made an astounding discovery on eclipses of the sun and moon by relating them to biblical prophecies concerning Israel. He refers to various 'blood moons' that will occur in 2014 and 2015 during the sabbatical year of the next year-week. He interprets this phenomenon in terms of Joel 2:31 where God says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."

Mark derived his information from the *NASA Eclipse Website* and discovered a clear pattern in the sequence of the eclipses by dating them according to the Jewish calendar. The back to back occurrence of four blood moons in successive years is a rare event in history. It happened in 1949/50 after Israel was restored to their land in 1948, and again in 1967/68 after biblical Jerusalem (the Old City) was recaptured by Israel in June 1967. The next time it occurs will be in 2014/15, and it is most probable that it could happen concurrent with important prophetic events in Israel.

It cannot be regarded as coincidence that all four blood moons of 2014/15 occur on religious festivals of Israel, together with two eclipses of the sun also on important days in 2015. A blood moon will occur on the 14th day of Nisan in 2014, when the Passover will be celebrated in Israel (cf. Lev. 23:5). Nisan is the first month in Israel's religious calendar. On the 15th day of the seventh month (Tishri) when the feast of Tabernacles begins (cf. Lev. 23:34), there will be another blood moon. Exactly the same pattern will be repeated in 2015. Because of Israel's lunar calendar these dates all coincide with the full moon – on these occasions the moon will become blood-red. Apart from the lunar eclipses there will also be two eclipses of the sun in 2015 – on the first day of Nisan and again on the first day of Tishri. The Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) is celebrated on 1st Tishri, which is the beginning of their civil calendar.

The discoveries of Mark Biltz are even more significant when it is taken into account that the year from 25 Sept. 2014 to 13 Sept. 2015 will be a sabbatical year which will conclude the year-week which starts with Rosh Hashanah on 30 Sept. 2008. Four blood moons in successive years will never occur again during the entire remainder of the 21st century. That strengthens the expectation that the year-week which starts on 30 Sept. 2008 and ends in Sept. 2015 might well be the seven year tribulation period under the rule of Antichrist. From Israel's point of view it will be the 70th year-week of Daniel. This conclusion cannot explicitly be stated as fact, but should nevertheless be considered a strong possibility.

Other prophetic evidence supports this expectation and Mark Biltz also expounded on related signs. He says that eclipses of the sun are associated with dark times in Israel's history, particularly when they occur in the month of Av (July/August). Jews fast during this month and lament the destruction of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar on 9 Av, as well as the destruction of the second temple by the Romans on the same day in the year 70 AD. Mark's research revealed that there will be three eclipses of the sun on exactly the same day on Israel's calendar – i.e. 1st Av in 2008, 2009, and 2010. According to Biltz these eclipses in Av indicate dark times for Israel and the nations and may allude to the outbreak of a major war in August 2008. The Jewish month of Av starts on 2nd August this year.

Circumstantial evidence should also be considered. There are various indications that the tension between Israel and her Muslim neighbours are close to breaking-point. Iran's president and religious leaders have made renewed calls for the complete annihilation of Israel. Their nuclear programme has been accelerated and they have armed Hezbollah in Lebanon to the teeth. This terrorist group now have 40 000 modern rockets that can hit any target in Israel. They have renewed their commitment to the total destruction of the Jewish state. The same campaign of hatred is also perpetrated against the US. There are strong rumours that Mr. Bush will order an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities before the end of his term of office. Mark won't be surprised if that happens during the coming month of Av (in August).

Worldwide pressure for the dividing of Israel's land and the city of Jerusalem in order to establish a Palestinian state also precipitates the coming war against Israel. It will be an intense struggle for survival in Israel but the Lord will intervene to end this war. After this divine intervention the Antichrist will appear on the scene and falsely claim credit for preventing the war.

The last generation

The whole scenario described by Mark Biltz also fits into the framework of the last generation which Christ refers to in His Olivet Discourse (Luke 21:32). From the context of this passage it is evident that the last generation starts at the budding of the fig tree, which was Israel's restoration in 1948. That refers to a generation of 70 years (cf. Ps. 90:10) which will end in 2018. During this generation all events leading up to Christ's return must be fulfilled, including the tribulation of seven years. The year-week from 30 Sept. 2008 to 13 Sept. 2015 is the last full year-week which can be tied in with the time of the last generation.

There is more than enough reason to seriously consider Mark's study and conclusions. We are commanded to look at Israel (the fig tree) if we wish to know where we stand in God's prophetic calendar (Luke 21:28-31). In the same chapter the Lord Jesus says, "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring" (Luke 21:25). In biblical prophecies there is a direct correlation between signs in heavenly bodies and distressing events happening on earth. We are rapidly approaching the time of the fulfilment of these signs.

The eclipses of the sun and moon confront us with precise dates which cannot be manipulated. Nevertheless, Mark says these signs should not be seen as an attempt to date-setting for the second coming of Christ but rather as a wake-up call to be ready for what may happen in the near future. Now is not the time to lapse into spiritual slumber like the foolish virgins.

Mark explained the significance of these signs during two TV interviews with Dr. J.R. Church and Gary Stearman of *Prophecy in the News*. They regard the information as very important. For more detail visit the website www.prophecyinthenews.com

Dr. J.R. Church also tried to avoid pertinent date-setting by accepting the whole scenario as only a possibility. He says if a major war in the Middle East breaks out in August or September we will know that the time for departing has indeed come. In that case we shall have a short-term expectation of the rapture of true believers, after which the Antichrist will be revealed to deceive all people on earth as a prelude to his international reign of terror which will follow 3½ years later.

Other opinions

There are other well-known eschatologists such as Jack Kelly who are of the opinion that there are simply too many things which first must happen before the Antichrist can be revealed – the war of Ezekiel 38 and 39 among others. He argues that the eventful year of 2015 could be the beginning of the seven year tribulation, rather than its end.

Apart from the fact that Jack's scheduling of the tribulation period does not fit into the time frame of the last generation, there are other factors that should be considered also. Iran makes no secret of their intention to wipe Israel off the map as soon as possible. Furthermore, they want to take revenge on America for supporting Israel, and also for attacking Afghanistan and Iraq which are Muslim countries. The tense situation in the Middle East cannot possibly continue for another seven years without a major war breaking out in the region.

Mr. Bush is definitely a war-minded person and it is not at all impossible that he will attack Iran during this final stage of his term as president. The Olympic Games which start in China in August will draw the attention of the world away from the Middle East, thereby offering the ideal opportunity to Iran and its allies, and also to the US and Israel, to carry out surprise attacks. Should Israel plan to eliminate Iran's nuclear plants they will do so while their double-hearted 'friend,' George Bush, is still in office. Among his possible successors are Clinton and Obama who both are pacifists. They will not assist Israel in their war efforts, nor will they themselves attack Iran.

Repeated calls by radical Muslims for a world-wide *jihad* are now heard everywhere – from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Egypt, the Palestinian territories in Israel, and even from Muslim groups in London. The scene is set to launch a major attack against non-Islamic infidels. The suicide bomb mentality of these people has over and over demonstrated that they have a fanatical, religious-driven hatred for their enemies and will not hesitate to plunge the whole world into chaos.

Israel still remains their most important target, but the Lord will not allow them to annihilate His people. According to Ezekiel 39:1-5, radical Muslims who will invade Israel under the leadership of Russia (Magog) will be destroyed on the mountains of Israel. That, together with the rapture, will bring about the end of the church dispensation and offer the Antichrist the opportunity to be revealed as Satan's world leader.

The correct perspective

It should be kept in mind that during the great tribulation the sun and moon will be darkened for extended periods because of air pollution caused by warfare, fires and natural disasters – particularly volcanic eruptions. In the thick clouds of smoke the sun will become black as sackcloth and the moon like blood. All these phenomena should be seen as part of a bigger picture, i.e. God's warning of impending judgements upon a wicked and rebellious humanity.

The most important matter with regard to the signs of the times is that we should consider our relationship with the Lord Jesus. It should not be our first priority to correctly understand prophetic signs, but to be Spirit-filled Christians who remain seriously committed to be witnesses for Christ right down to the end. We will then escape the judgements and go to be with the Lord when He comes for His bridal congregation, regardless of whether we were experts in biblical eschatology or not. We should always maintain a correct balance in our spiritual lives by correctly determining our priorities. If we do that, we will have the right disposition in both respects – we will observe sound spiritual values and also take a lively interest in the literal fulfilment of end-time prophecies concerning the second coming of Christ.

We are experiencing difficult times in which our faith and love is severely tested. Jesus said, "Sin will be rampant everywhere and will cool the love of many" (Matt. 24:12; *Living Bible*). We must guard against backsliding. When the signs of the times are fulfilled all around us we should "look up and lift up our heads, because our redemption draws near" (Luke 21:28). We should take courage in the midst of deteriorating conditions in the world because there is a hopeful future for all true Christians. The Lord will intervene by way of the rapture and change our lives for ever: "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36; cf. 1 Thess. 4:16-17).

We must press towards the goal that is set before us by living as people who have a strong future expectation for a pre-tribulation rapture: "But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that [the day of the Lord] should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:4). Those who don't expect the soon coming of the Lord, and are not spiritually strong, will exert themselves for a human-made kingdom on earth. These activities will end in great disillusion for all deceived people as they will unwittingly promote the humanistic peace and reconciliation initiatives of the Antichrist's agenda for instituting a satanically-inspired new world order. They will suddenly find themselves in his kingdom and have no way of escaping God's judgements upon the wicked (1 Thess. 5:3).