

July 27 Blood Moon: Look Up!

By T.W. Tramm

FRIDAY, July 27, the longest-in-duration total lunar eclipse of the century will rise in the Eastern Hemisphere.

To most viewing the eclipse, it is simply a rare and awe-inspiring phenomenon to be observed. For many Bible believers, however, it's a sign of the impending day of the Lord:

"The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Joel 2:31).

We've seen a string of biblically significant eclipses in recent years. For a number of reasons, though, the impending eclipse feels more like a final warning, or last call:

DURATION

Because the eclipse is occurring as the Moon is at its furthest distance from Earth, the event will last just over 6 hours. The total phase of the eclipse will last an impressive 1 hour and 43 minutes. There will not be another eclipse of this duration for at least 100 years.

CONVERGENCE

Friday's blood moon occurs at a time when the prophetic stage is set as never before and, arguably, never will be again:

- Israel just celebrated its prophetic 70th anniversary as a nation. In Scripture, the number 70 denotes an endpoint or culmination related to humanity and God's plan of redemption (Matt. 24:32-34; Ps. 90:10; Jer. 29:10; Dan. 9:24-27).
- For the first time in history, the nations surrounding Israel are aligned precisely as foretold in end-times Bible prophecy, and the war drums are beating loudly (Ez. 38; Zech. 12).
- A peace plan being touted the "deal of the century" and boasting significant (off-the-record) Arab support is soon to be unveiled (1 Thess. 5:3).

- Not only are unusual and record-breaking seismic and weather phenomena occurring worldwide this summer but in Israel, specifically: freakish rains, flooding, and earthquake swarms (Matt. 24:7, 8). This week, just hours after the conclusion of Tisha B'Av, the solemn holy day commemorating the destruction of both Jewish temples, a massive 2,000-year-old boulder dislodged from the Western Wall and fell onto the prayer platform below. An omen?

DATE

The calendar date of the eclipse is significant. The moon will take on its eerie reddish tone on the heels of a popular Jewish holiday called Tu B'Av. According to the Talmud, Tu B'Av was a joyous festival marking the beginning of the grape harvest. On this day in ancient Israel, virgins would dress in white garments and dance in the vineyards to attract husbands. It is said that whoever did not have a wife would go there to find himself a bride. Some speculate that the marriage of the Gentile Ruth to a Jewish redeemer, Boaz, may have occurred on Tu B'Av. Thus, Tu B'Av is celebrated as a holiday of love, similar to our Valentine's Day, and is considered an ideal day for weddings.

AREA OF VIEWABILITY AND TIMING

The most compelling element of this Friday's lunar eclipse is the area of viewability and timing. While the blood moon will be partially visible in much of Europe, Asia, Australia, Africa, and South America, the entirety of the eclipse occurs specifically over the Middle East—ground zero for Bible prophecy—and ends just past midnight Jerusalem time.

That the blood moon ends around midnight Jerusalem time is interesting because Matthew 25 contains a parable about ten virgins who go out to meet the bridegroom. Because the groom is a long time in coming, they all become drowsy and fall asleep. At *midnight,* a cry rings out: "Here comes the bridegroom, come out to meet him!" The virgins awaken and trim their lamps to get ready. However, half of them find they are lacking oil, symbolic of the Holy Spirit and a saving relationship with Christ. While the "foolish virgins" are out trying to gather up the vital oil, the bridegroom arrives to usher those who are ready into the wedding and closes the door behind.

Later, the foolish virgins come knocking, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But the Lord responds, "I don't know you."

The signs all around indicate midnight is near. Preparations have been made and invitations sent out for the wedding of weddings—the joining of the Church to Messiah. To take part in the nuptials, however, one must have oil in his lamp. One must know the Bridegroom.

Do you?

NOTES:

Tu B'Av (Av 15) is said to be the greatest day on the Jewish calendar, second only in importance to Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement. One reason Tu B'Av is held in such high regard is that, like Yom Kippur, it's connected to the forgiveness of sin, namely the "sin of the ten spies" which caused the Lord to place a curse on the day of Tisha B'Av (Av 9). According to tradition, every year on the 9th of Av, Moses would command the people to dig graves and sleep in them as punishment for believing the discouraging report about the Land. The Israelites would awaken each year to find that all those who had reached the age of sixty had died during the night. When the final (40th) year of Israel's sentence of wandering the wilderness came, however, the last 15,000 of that generation did *not* die on Tisha B'Av. Assuming they had erred in calculation, the Israelites waited another day, and then another, for the impending judgment. When the full moon appeared on Tu B'Av, they realized that God had forgiven the sin of the spies.

After the Israelites entered the Land, Tu B'Av began to be celebrated as the day that they had been freed from the curse of the grave and allowed to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, who is a prophetic type of Christ.

Another tradition linked to Tu B'Av is that it commemorates the readmission of the Tribe of Benjamin into the tribal community and the lifting of a ban on intermarriage through the daughters of Zelophehad. Thus, Tu B'Av is the day in ancient Israel that virgins would dress in white and dance in the vineyards to attract husbands. Some speculate that the marriage of Ruth and Boaz may have occurred on Tu B'Av. Scripture records that Ruth lived with her mother-in-law, Naomi, until all of the wheat harvest was complete (Ruth 2:21-23). Tu B'Av marks the beginning of the grape harvest and, therefore, some suggest, an unofficial conclusion to the wheat harvest, which is when Ruth would have stopped living with her mother-in-law to take up residence with her new husband, Boaz.

Other interesting Tu B'Av facts:

- It's believed that Tu B'Av will somehow be instrumental in the rebuilding process of the third Temple in Jerusalem.
- Since Tu B'Av falls on the full moon of what is an otherwise dark and tragic month (Av), it's thought to hint at Israel's future redemption.
- The rabbis associate Tu B'Av with the coming of Messiah, "like a groom to His bride," to redeem Israel from her state of exile.

Tu B'Av's association with marriage, redemption, and triumph over the curse of death to enter the Promised Land, make it a popular date of rapture speculation. The modern Jewish calendar has Tu B'Av (Av 15) occurring July 27 in 2018. If we reckon Nisan 1 the first new moon after the equinox, as one camp suggest is correct, Tu B'Av occurs a month later in August. Either way, Scripture says no man or angel knows the day (Matt. 24:36; 44; Mark 13:35-37). So keep watch!